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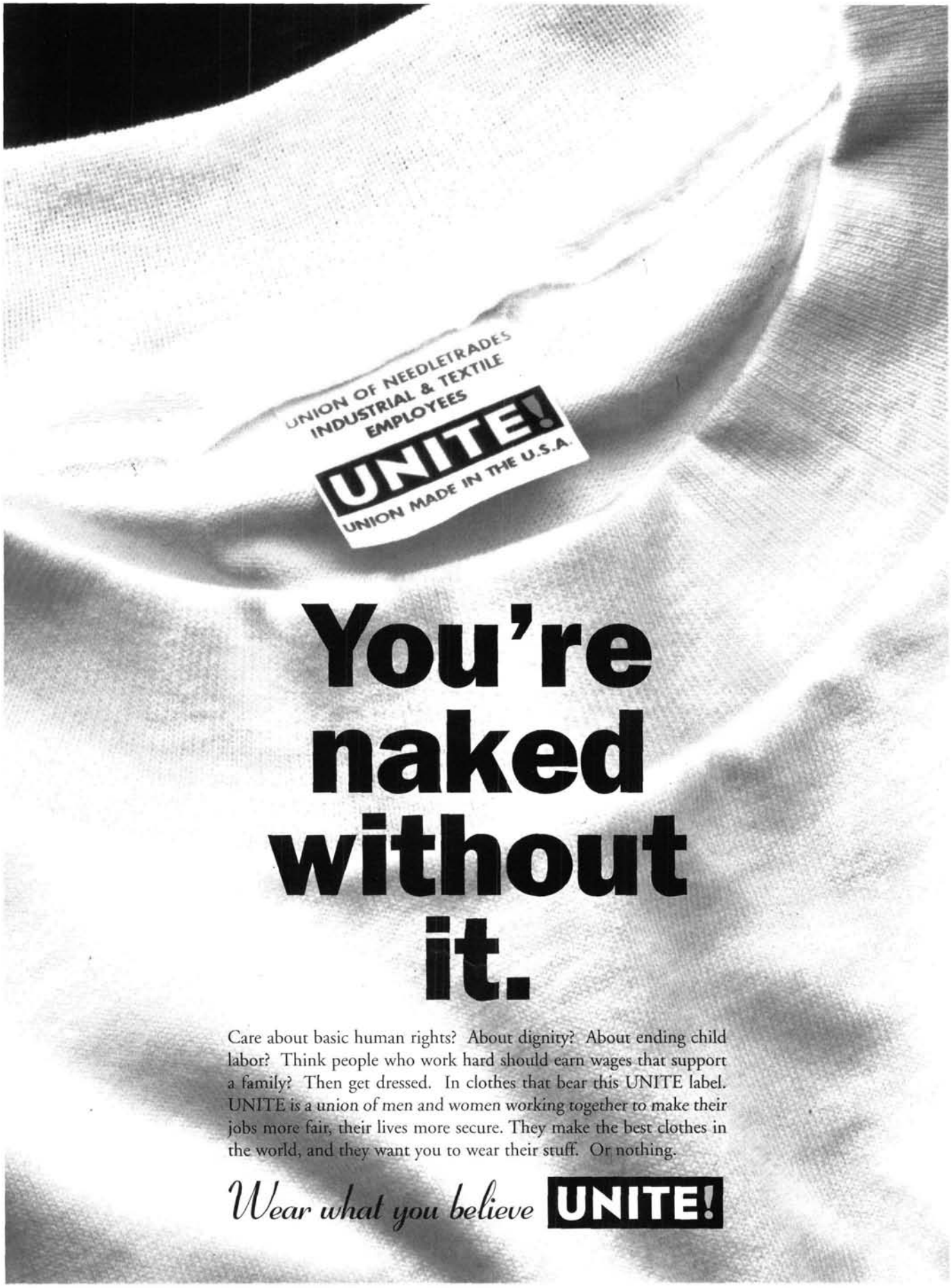

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

DECEMBER 16, 1996

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
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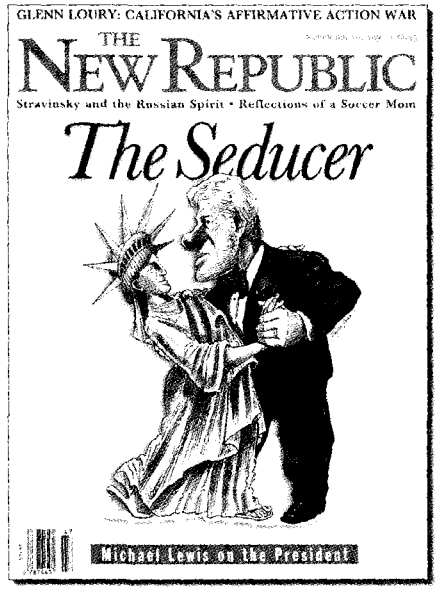
CORRESPONDENCE

Jet lag

To the editors:

"Flight from Reality" (October 7) might best describe Michael Fumento's journalistic style in his charge that important information about ValuJet Airlines was withheld from the public. Incredibly, Fumento claims that a "May 2" FAA report, which included the fact that the carrier had sustained several accidents under the international reporting definition, had been "covered up" and that FAA staff even earlier had recommended that the airline be grounded. Both charges are false. In February of this year, after a number of accidents and other incidents had occurred, the FAA put the airline's operations under a 120-day special emphasis review that was beyond our normal high level of scrutiny. Additional inspectors were assigned to monitor the airline, and they physically inspected every single operating aircraft. We did not have to wait, as Fumento seems to be saying, for a "May 2" report to take action. This special emphasis review found numerous problems, and the carrier was required to develop a plan that would correct these deficiencies. But, contrary to the article, a February 14 report by the FAA did not recommend that the airline should be grounded at that point in time. It did, however, make recommendations for increasing scrutiny of the carrier, all of which were already being implemented. This fact, as well as any other details of the special emphasis review, all since made public, were omitted in the story. The special emphasis review was intensified after the Flight 592 accident in May. This included stepped-up inspection of aircraft, an audit of contract maintenance facilities and numerous other measures. This intensified review encompassed over 2,000 separate inspections in four weeks, one of the most sweeping reviews of all facets of a carrier's operations in aviation history, and resulted in the decision to ground the carrier on June 17. Chief among the deficiencies found by the FAA was the carrier's systemwide inability to adequately manage its maintenance program. As a result, the FAA instituted a number of changes to toughen our oversight of airlines relying on contract maintenance and training. This included a requirement that airlines demonstrate their regulatory compliance of major contract maintenance and training programs and receive approval from the FAA before adding a new contractor to their operations specifications. Additionally, a ninety-day study by Deputy Administrator Linda Hall Daschle, just released last month, set forth six principles and thirty supporting recommendations to enhance our oversight and safety inspection functions. Today, it is very clear that our principal lesson learned from this episode is that this agency must exert a higher degree of oversight on carriers that are growing rapidly and rely heavily on outsourced labor to support their operations. I believe the FAA has put the needed measures in place to accomplish this task, but we will continually review and adjust these as necessary to keep pace with changing practices in commercial aviation. At no time would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The Seducer
Michael Lewis on the President

we ever attempt to "cover up" or deceive the public about the safety of an airline.

DAVID R. HINSON
Federal Aviation Administration, Washington, D.C.

Michael Fumento replies:

David Hinson's letter assumes the reader either did not read or has forgotten the original article.

1. Hinson refused to let me interview him and specifically refused to tell me when he had seen the May 2 report. Department of Transportation Secretary Federico Peña also refused to be interviewed.

2. When Peña appeared on TV the morning after the ValuJet crash, he held the May 2 report in his hands, claiming "we've looked at the safety record of both the low-cost carriers and the so-called higher-cost carriers" and "the safety records ... are comparable." In fact, the report singled out ValuJet as having an exceptionally poor safety record, with an accident rate fourteen times that of the higher-cost carriers and a serious accident rate thirty-two times greater. How can that possibly be interpreted as something other than a cover-up and deception?

3. The February 14 internal FAA memorandum called for ValuJet's "re-certification." That in DOT's parlance means shutting it down. "That's what everyone at DOT thought it meant," FAA Inspector General Mary Schiavo told me. "That's what I thought it meant."

4. My article made clear that the FAA had put ValuJet under special oversight, as Hinson relates at length. It also made it clear that, despite ValuJet's horrific accident rate, this is *all* the FAA did, thereby allowing ValuJet to continue to fly and ultimately condemning to death over 100 passengers on ValuJet Flight 592. Even then, Hinson and Peña insisted on waiting another month before finally shutting down a carrier that even after the crash Peña repeatedly and grotesquely insisted was "a safe airline."

Arithmetic illiteracy

To the editors:

In his November 18 letter, Frederick Pryor criticizes Matthew Miller's "thunder against demagoguery on Medicare" by describing the GOP's proposed 40 percent increase of Medicare over seven years as "representing an annual growth of about 7 percent." Obviously, this is arithmetically wrong. Even uncompounded, 7 percent per year over seven years yields 49 percent growth. Forty percent over seven years represents a compound annual growth rate of only 4.9 percent. Ironically, the lower figure strengthens Pryor's argument.

To paraphrase Miller, this kind of arithmetic illiteracy has a truly corrupting effect on public understanding.

PHILIP SILLER
Toronto, Ontario

Means well

To the editors:

In "Votes for Sale" (November 18), Michael J. Sandel tackles the tough issue of the economic campaign promise as a bribe for votes. He asks the question, "If it is disreputable to sell my vote to a party boss for $500, why is it reputable to cast my vote for the sake of a $500 tax cut?" And he answers that the tax cut is worse because it is better that the bribe be done with private money than with taxpayer dollars.

Sandel misses two central points: (1) the money represented by the tax cut

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belonged to the taxpayer before the government took it, so it is not somebody else's money being given to the voter, and (2) there are important policy implications in a tax cut that, to some voters, may be more important than personally receiving the cut. Supply-siders, rightly or wrongly, believe that a tax cut at the appropriate stage of the business cycle is the proper policy to generate economic growth.

The theory that politics is economics by other means is incomplete because it ignores the psychological roles of idealism (i.e., ideology): the acting skills, physical attractiveness and general likability of the candidates, and the inertia of party identification. Sandel is right to criticize this theory but he has the wrong reasons.

BILL EASTLAND
Arlington, Texas

Clean sweep

To the editors:

Congratulations to Hal Bruno on the accuracy of his Weekly Electoral Vote Estimate. When I take the last map before the election and split the "even" projection between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, Clinton has 377 and Dole 161—the actuals were 379 and 159. That's as close to perfection as Ivory soap is to purity.

DAVID A. BINZEN
Tunbridge, Vermont

Propped up

To the editors:

Your editorial on California's Proposition 209 ("Stuffed Ballots," November 18) contains one of the most disingenuous discussions of affirmative action that I have encountered. This is most evident in the sentence: "But while diversity is a worthwhile pursuit, it is not, as affirmative action's practitioners implicitly assert, one worth sacrificing fairness and honesty for."

If the writer had undertaken any research on the financing and governance of public education, he would know that special favors are given not to minorities but to those fortunate enough, in the lottery of birth, to have been born into suburban districts with large property-determined tax bases. I have visited many suburban public schools that have numerous computer stations and CD-ROM and Internet capacities in their libraries, with every classroom outfitted to accept video and computer technology, with classroom student-teacher ratios of 20 to 1, with networks of support groups—from SAT prep classes to special funding for extracurricular programs. On the other hand, I have been in city schools where the libraries lack staffing and are locked, never mind ill-equipped, where the classroom student-teacher ratios are 35 to 1 or worse, where the textbooks are long outdated and capacities for copying primary materials are severely limited, where the buildings and grounds are comparable in disrepair and filthiness to Third World standards, and where there are little or no support networks.

JOHN PIERRE AMEER
Boston, Massachusetts

Losers

To the editors:

Michael Kelly ("Our Hero," December 2) was unaware of any presidential candidate other than Ralph Nader who found campaigning beneath him. In fact, when President John Quincy Adams ran for re-election in 1828 he also did not want to campaign or "exhibit himself" to the public. Adams said, "If my country wants my services, she must ask for them." Not surprisingly, he also lost.

MICHAEL MAKOVSKY
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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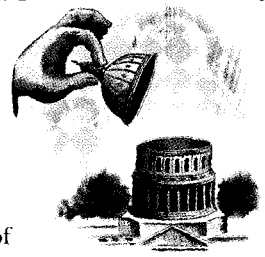
FROM WASHINGTON

A plea for diversity

Around here, we have been talking lately about whom President Clinton should pick as his new Secretary of State, and, by and large, the conversation has been conducted on a pretty elevated plane. Until now. By the time this is read, Clinton may have made his choice, but I would still like to take this opportunity to get on the record with a low, ad hominem assault against two fine men. I'm violently opposed to the idea of Richard Holbrooke as Secretary of State and only slightly less set against George Mitchell, and it is entirely personal. I don't care if they're qualified. They represent that which makes life in Washington hell. They are archetypes of the Washington Male. The Washington Male is the reason so many Washington females have that drawn, pained expression all the time. It comes from having dinner with Washington Males. I grew up here, and I have been going with mounting reluctance to Washington dinner parties more or less all my life, and at every table I have ever sat at there has been either a Holbrooke or a Mitchell. One is louder than the other, but they're both unbearable. There is nothing that arises in This Town on which they do not have an opinion. And it is going to be an informed opinion. And it is going to be an informed opinion that they have recently shared with the president, or Ted Koppel, or Bill Safire. And it is going to be an informed opinion expressed in ringing, plonking tones. And it is very likely going to be a fatuous informed opinion recently shared, ringingly expressed. But there is not going to be any gainsaying it, not unless you are prepared to spend the next two hours arguing the finer points of Pamela Harriman's subtle influence on our policy toward Nagorno-Karabakh. There's no kidding about it, either; the Washington Male has absolutely and profoundly no sense of humor.

And greater love hath no man than this: that of the Washington Male for the Washington Male. A really pure Washington Male can be wrong about everything he does and says for decades without harboring a single twinge of self-doubt. (Robert McNamara was probably the platonic ideal here. You would think that a man who had given the world the Edsel, flexible response and the war in Vietnam would stop to consider whether he was really cut out for executive work. But no, on to the World Bank and to building the debt crisis.) Earlier this year, the playwright Anna Devere Smith spent a couple of months in Washington observing the locals. The thing that above all amazed her, she told me, was her discovery of the habit the Washington Male has, when reaching for a particularly *bon mot*, of literally quoting himself. "You will be seated next to some man at a dinner party—a reporter, usually—and he will turn to you, and say, 'As I said on Brinkley yesterday,' and then he will, honestly, repeat word for word what he did say on Brinkley yesterday," she marveled. "It's the most astonishing thing." There are women in Washington who have been listening to this sort of stuff every night for thirty years. It's a miracle the homicide rate is as low as it is.



Holbrooke is, in a very obvious way, the perfect Washington Male. You couldn't make him up. I spent some time last summer trailing him around Washington and Croatia for a story in *The New Yorker* about his efforts to negotiate a peace in Bosnia. Generally, the problem in this kind of reporting is getting access to the person you are writing about; people involved in sensitive diplomatic missions tend to be wary about talking to the press. With Holbrooke, the problem was limiting the access. I would spend two or three hours taping, say, Holbrooke on Milosevic, walk back to my hotel room and barely get my shoes off before the phone rang with a call from the State Department operator patching through Holbrooke on Karadzic. He once called me in the middle of the night to announce that he had made space for me on his jet for a flight early the next morning from Belgrade to Sarajevo. But, I said weakly, I was not in Belgrade. I was in Washington, in bed. He was appalled. Well, he said, the flight leaves in seven hours. Could I get to Belgrade by then? Eventually, exhaustedly, I wrote a modest story that I thought was mostly positive; it gave Holbrooke the credit he deserved for the Dayton peace plan, such as it was. I don't think Holbrooke liked it very much. A year later he found a better biographer: himself. He wrote up his own story and *The New Yorker* published it, at about the time the Nobel Committee was deciding who should get the peace prize this year. A few days after the magazine went on the stands, *The New Yorker*'s publicity department got a telephone call from Holbrooke's office. The ambassador's office wanted to know if *The New Yorker* had sent a copy of the issue to every member of Congress.

Mitchell is a less obvious Washington Male than Holbrooke. He is a lot quieter, for one thing. But he is alike in the essentials. Where Holbrooke has ostentatiously clawed and grappled his way up the greasy pole, Mitchell has more gently floated ever higher, borne on the uplifting vapors of mediocrity rising to its natural level. As Senate majority leader, he managed to be both relentlessly partisan and relentlessly ineffective. He did at least as much as Newt Gingrich to cost the Democrats Congress, and he was even more sanctimonious about it. Actually, in a contest between Holbrooke and Mitchell, Holbrooke comes out ahead. He is at least skilled at what he does (that is to say, he is skilled at bullying people, which is how he got the boys to sign in Dayton, and he is skilled at leaking and spinning to the press, which is how he made Dayton look like Appomattox). And he is naked in his hungers, and there is something perversely appealing about that. Mitchell manages, like McNamara, to augment a nearly total lack of competence with a nearly total conviction that he is perfectly competent for anything. Holbrooke is Kissinger without the wit; Mitchell is Christopher without the suits. Holbrooke as Secretary would mean that *The New York Times* would run every day a story detailing how, in the words of an unnamed senior administration official, everyone in the administration except Secretary Holbrooke was an utter buffoon. Mitchell as Secretary would mean that the *Times* would run every day a story explaining how, in the words of an unnamed senior administration official, we could do business with the Serbs, but not with the Republicans.

So what is called for is diversity. Give the job to the candidate from the other gender. Madeleine Albright has a lot of things going for her. She is smart, she is not averse to the use of force, she has been tough and right at the United Nations, she can't abide Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and at times she is even funny. It is true that she is a friend of Barbra Streisand, but it's only a matter of time before Richard Holbrooke and George Mitchell are friends of Barbra Streisand, too.

MICHAEL KELLY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

DECEMBER 16, 1996

SELL OUT

President Clinton is at it again. During the Asian-Pacific Cooperation Forum at the end of November, Clinton met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin and agreed to schedule state visits over the next two years, effectively ending the quarantine on summit-level trips imposed since Tiananmen Square. The White House believes the visits will end the roller coaster-like relationship between China and the U.S. that characterized Clinton's first term, and, in diplomatic and business circles, many stomachs do appear settled by the news: Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord declared that "clearly, the relationship has stabilized and gained momentum from where we were last spring." Even the usually moralistic press is pleased by the new realism: "ASIAN TALKS PUT U.S. TIES ON TRACK," noted the November 25 *Washington Post* headline.

Sorry, but improving relations with China does not mean an improved American foreign policy, unless you think capitulation is an improvement. Clinton's attempt to warm relations with the Chinese has been a one-sided endeavor: before Warren Christopher travels to Beijing, the Chinese regime sentences dissidents to prison terms; the administration responds by calling doggedly for engagement and the opening of Chinese markets which do not yet exist, but which we are depressingly sure will be closed as soon as they do. It's not, as some commentators insist, that the Chinese are anti-American; they're anti-democracy. When German President Roman Herzog visited, on the same days as Christopher, Beijing pulled off a similar stunt, expelling a German priest who supposedly had contacts with the underground church. Like Christopher, Herzog smiled for the cameras, made a few noises about human rights and focused mainly on trade.

The eagerness of Western countries to tap into the potential Chinese market has meant Beijing can play one country off against another. The Japanese, Germans and French are all vying with the U.S. to land contracts. The disunity of the West has allowed Beijing to shrug off any strictures about human rights and reward those countries, such as Germany, that keep the most discrete silence.

But the West may be selling itself short. For one thing, the giddiness about the Chinese economy that has prompted the West to subordinate security and human rights to the business lobby may not last. Throughout Asia, as *Businessweek* reports in its December 2 cover story, economies are slowing down. China is no exception. Despite 10 percent average growth over the past decade, paper, chemical and steel factories are awash in red ink. The regime is reluctant to privatize state industries, and Beijing's restrictions on its stock market mean entrepreneurs have a hard time raising capital. Another big problem is the growth of transients, millions of whom are streaming from the countryside to the city, where they aimlessly roam the streets. Until China figures out how to deal with its peasant class, it will never be a leading power. Indeed, one of the most significant indices of China's woes is that it has begun importing grain.

Grain, however, is one of the few things Beijing does import. China sells far more to the West than the West sells to China. The trade deficit between China and the U.S. is nearly $38 billion, and the Europeans have similar shortfalls. In short, China needs the West more than the West needs China.

But neither the Clinton administration nor the GOP sees it that way. Republicans have no complaints about Clinton's China policy; after all, Clinton has come around to the Bush administration's line. The truth is that both parties have largely fallen hostage to a powerful China business lobby. As a result, the Clinton administration has gone from espousing human rights in 1992 to almost completely reversing course. In 1994, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor John Shattuck, known for ruffling White House feathers, met with Wei Jingsheng, a prominent human rights activist. This time, however, with Wei languishing through yet another fourteen-year prison term, Shattuck kept silent. The furthest the administration will go is National Security Adviser Anthony Lake's feeble statement that "we will continue to pursue our interest in human rights, like our interests in opening the Chinese market and getting good Chinese performance on nonproliferation issues."

In truth, the Clinton administration has abandoned human rights without opening the Chinese market. A case could be made for jettisoning human rights in favor of national security or for economic gain. But the Clinton administration has ended up with the worst of all possible worlds. It has traded them away for nothing. •

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NOTEBOOK

POLL CAT: Values guru Gary L. Bauer, renowned for his screeds against abortion, homosexuality and Hollywood values, has found a ripe new target for his ire: consultants. In a speech delivered on November 20 to Washington's Heritage Foundation and subsequently faxed to dozens of news outlets, and cited in the next day's *Washington Times*, Bauer called upon his "fellow Republicans to save donors a lot of money 'by jettisoning the whole political clique of Washington manipulators,' " whom he blames for nudging Republican candidates away from social conservatism. "For way too long now, both political parties have been guided by political consultants, pollsters and focus-group gurus who substitute media manipulation for a governing philosophy." He added, "We need to look no further for the growing cynicism of the American people." No further, that is, than to Bauer himself. The truth is that the cherubic ex-Reagan aide loves polls—so long as they bear out his own righteous premonitions. Press releases from Bauer's organization, the Family Research Council, touting the family-friendly insights of the group's latest survey have long clogged TNR's fax bin. "POLL DATA SHOWS MAJORITY ARE TROUBLED BY ABORTION," crowed a March 1995 press release on their web site. Several months earlier, Bauer's number-crunching revealed that—surprise!—"PARENTS WANT HELP FIGHTING THE POP CULTURE'S ADVERSE INFLUENCE." And he hardly shies away from media manipulation—prior to the 1996 conventions, this upwardly mobile virtucrat sent out a press release promoting himself: "From abortion to the need for pro-family tax relief—domestic policy will head the list of hot topics during the convention news cycle. And to meet the need for conservative political analysis Gary L. Bauer will be available. Called 'an influential conservative' by *The New York Times*. . . . " In short, far from disdaining the culture of poll 'n' spin, the peripatetic think-tanker has proved himself its master. Cynical, indeed.

INDIRECT MAIL: The Seniors Coalition sounds like a kindly bunch of elders, playing mah-jongg and waving flags at rallies. The group's vice president, Jake Hansen, writes an occasional wonkish op-ed, weighing the merits of increasing Part B Medicare premiums. But, as we learned from their latest direct-mail campaign, the coalition is far from gentle. "Due to an unprecedented health care emergency," the letter begins, and asks you to fill out an official sounding form called Project #6-544. Failure to complete it, it warns, could lead to "loss of your current personal physician." The letter does not say what the code red is, but it uses innovative grammatical techniques to quote prominent democrats, saying things like "we'll get single payer [socialized health care]." The pitch accuses the AARP of "greed," but warns that, if you fail to send your generous contribution to the Seniors Coalition, "you will lose everything you hold dear. . . . *Possibly even your life.*" And we thought Clinton was "scaring seniors."

FULL OF STARS: As expected, *Time*'s widebodied, 96-page commemorative election edition provided peachy computer graphics, stunning photographs from the campaign trail—and some singularly trenchant political analysis. Take Garrison Keillor's hard-hitting breakdown of the American body politic, replete with a cunning *Huck Finn* allusion at its close: "You and I, whoever we are, are together on the raft drifting down the Mississippi, the sky full of stars, islands drifting by . . . and even though I know I should, I will not turn you in to the authorities. Peace." Or Peggy Noonan's paean to Bob Dole, punctuated by her on-the-spot observations from a Dole stump speech. "[T]here was the young mother in jeans, hair frosted blonde, a baby in her arms and a toddler in a stroller," Noonan remembers. Spotting Dole, the woman "said to someone, 'That's him—oh, I'll never get there with the kids...' I turned and motioned to the stroller. 'Go ahead,' I said. 'I'll watch him.' She looked at me as her brain rolled out the possibilities . . . and she jerked the stroller softly and barreled toward Dole . . . 'Oh,' she said as she left, 'oooooooh!' " The pampered columnist as babysitting everywoman: let's hear it for civic journalism!

RENT ASUNDER: A New York University drama professor named Lynn Thomson has sued the estate of Jonathan Larson, late author of the Broadway smash *Rent*, for $40 million. Thomson says she collaborated on the musical with Larson and, according to *The New York Post*'s account, that she "transformed him by replacing his negativism and suicidal thoughts with positive action and human growth." The show opened in February, shortly after Larson's death, and may earn more than $1 billion, the *Post* says. "I can't tell you how devastating all this has been," Thomson told the newspaper. "If he were alive today, he'd be laying gold bricks at my doorstep."

THE PLOT THICKENS: For years, *The Wall Street Journal* editorial page has demonized Food and Drug Administration Chairman David Kessler. So it should have been thrilled at last week's announcement by the crusading administrator that he plans to leave the FDA. But, despite the season, the *Journal* simply can't give thanks. The resignation, you see, is just another plot. "This 'resignation' looks like the perfect Kessler stroke," the *Journal* deduced. "He's made himself a perpetual, and powerful, lame duck." Yes, a masterful double-decoy: a sinister power grab that looks, on the surface, like an abandonment of power. The conspiracy lives on.

HOME NEWS: This week's cover story marks the debut of "Media Rex," a regular column on the press and the information culture by senior editor William Powers. •

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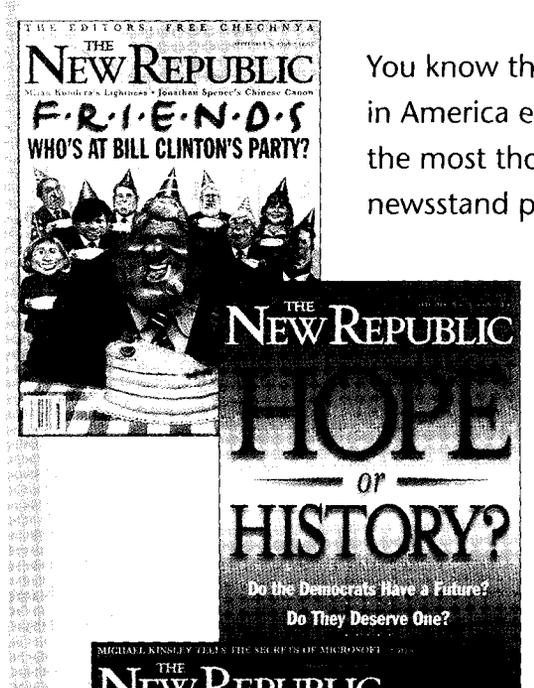

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The also-rans take off for 2000.

THE RABBITS

By Sydney Freedberg Jr.

At half past midnight, in the early morning of November 6—just after Bob Dole had formally conceded—the "Republican Fund for the Nineties" mass-faxed a statement by its founder, Lamar Alexander. In it, the former Tennessee governor and the one-time presidential aspirant praised Dole for his "brave campaign," lamented the candidate's loss, and the country's, and swiftly moved to prescribe a GOP political strategy for the next four years. The statement concluded: "We should never fall into the habit of settling for only winning the Congress. The era of big government will never end until we have a Republican President." Whomever could Lamar have had in mind?

That same day, another GOP primary loser, multimillionaire publisher Steve Forbes, sent out a fax touting his tireless work this campaign season on behalf of the Republican Party and, as if they were synonymous, "his message of 'hope, growth, and opportunity' " (which is to say, a flat tax). And, a week after the election, when I tried to reach Dan Quayle's press secretary, the message I got back was that "she's traveling with the vice president—who's in Iowa right now." Apparently, Quayle had felt a compelling need to speak before the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute and the Young Presidents Organization.

Don't these people have *work* to do? Actually, no. A strange fact of modern American politics is that actually holding political office becomes, at a certain level, an impediment to one's political career: anyone (the president excepted) who works full time cannot possibly campaign full time as well. Thus, we have one of the finer small ironies of presidential politics. Except in the case of a first-term incumbent, the earliest and most aggressive campaigners for the presidency are often precisely those least likely to win: men who have already failed at one shot at the presidency and who haven't found anything else they really want to do with their lives.

Each of the off-and-running GOP hopefuls for 2000 fits this description. Steve Forbes comes closest to actual, gainful employment, since as president of *Forbes* magazine he oversees a vast-ish media empire—but, like any emperor, he leaves the daily details to his viziers. Lamar Alexander, meanwhile, has become the eleventh board member of a Nashville company specializing in corporate childcare, a job he says will leave him and his wife plenty of time to "give back more to the community." And Dan Quayle has undergone the unlikeliest career metamorphosis of all. He's retreated to an institution that has not always treated him kindly in the past: the university. As of February 5, Quayle will lecture on "Global Competitiveness: Political Strategy and Leadership for the 21st Century" at the American Graduate School of International Management (a respected business school that, peculiarly, prefers to be referred to by its nickname, "Thunderbird"), in the early primary state of Arizona. A Thunderbird spokesman estimated that Quayle's class will meet "a couple of hours every other week"—leaving the "distinguished visiting professor of international studies" plenty of time for scholarly research.

For all three of these men, campaign 2000 has begun. The announcements, official and unofficial, will be postponed for a decent interval; the gossip, and the tangible preparations, are already well underway. Just as generals never call their rearward motion a retreat, politicians decline to call their forward motion a run, but in both cases the demurral is pro forma. "I'm very likely to be a candidate," the moderate Alexander declared the day after the election. And Quayle—who has been courting the religious right—noted, a bit pointedly and more than a bit disloyally, in the last days of the campaign: "For some reason our party has a requirement that you've got to be 73 before you run for president. I've got seven presidential elections to go before I'm 73. But if I decide to run for president, I'm not going to wait that long." Forbes is careful to cite sitting governors when asked about promising GOP leaders and, when asked the obligatory question, gives "the obligatory answer: it's too early to tell"—but he adds, as an example of the volatility of politics, that, just before the Republican convention, his friend and ally Jack Kemp wasn't even sure he would bother to go. "Forty-eight hours later," Forbes adds significantly, "he got the call."

But none of these men is just waiting by the phone. Freed from the burdens of work, the full-time candidate can give freely of himself to fund-raising for worthy causes—such as his campaign. Each of the three GOP early hopefuls boasts his own pet organization. Alexander has his Republican Fund for the Nineties PAC, which donated $180,000 to 230 candidates at both the federal and state levels this election season. That leaves a lot of Republicans in Alexander's debt; and, since the PAC raised $900,000, it also leaves an ample sum, even after expenses, still in its coffers—a potential "Alexander 2000" fund. As for Quayle, he inherited "Campaign America" from Dole in October 1995, and the PAC lived up to its name. Hitting almost every state in the union, Quayle's organization disbursed well over $1 million, far outstripping Alexander. Ideological affinity explains some of the contributions, but hardly all. In one gubernatorial race, both Quayle and Alexander sent money to Bill Zeliff, the odds-on favorite to win the GOP nomination; when a dark horse, Ovide Lamontagne, got the nod instead, both Quayle and Alexander

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What's Happening With U.S.-Japan Trade?

Quite a lot. While the U.S. trade deficit with Japan is still quite large, there has been significant progress during the last year or so in reducing this seemingly permanent fixture of U.S.-Japan economic relations. But that's only part of the story. Behind it are a number of positive trends that bode well for the future.

First is the trade situation itself. Last year, U.S. exports to Japan surged by 20.3%, while Japanese exports to the U.S. grew by only 2.8%. Equally encouraging is the fact that America's *surplus* with Japan in services—a fast-growing category not usually included in trade balance reports—expanded in 1995 by as much as 80% to $10.5 billion.

Aside from the still-strong yen, which makes U.S. goods cheaper in Japan and Japanese goods more costly in the U.S., Japan's ongoing efforts to make its markets more open and promote deregulation are bearing fruit, especially as American manufacturers are trying harder to meet Japanese consumer needs. And although Japan will always be a big importer of raw materials and foodstuffs—it's the top foreign market for U.S. agricultural goods—the fact that finished goods now account for 60% of Japan's overall imports (up from 31% in 1985) has translated into greater opportunities for manufacturers in some of America's most competitive industries. Some examples: in 1995, U.S. medical equipment and office machinery manufacturers posted double-digit gains in Japan.

Japanese exports to the U.S. in some key sectors, like autos, are declining because of increased local manufacturing in the U.S. But trade is a two-way street, so both sides benefit from such "transplant" operations. Japanese manufacturers save on shipping costs, while gaining access to high-quality, reasonably priced components; American communities gain good jobs—more than 700,000 to date—as well as other economic advantages, and U.S. suppliers gain new business opportunities.

Although the U.S. and Japan still have some work to do on their trade relationship, it's important not to lose sight of the good things that are happening.

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hastened to support him. The state: New Hampshire.

Oddly enough, the wealthy Forbes is the weakest of the three in the fund-raising department. Forbes's "Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity" is an idea factory—or at least an ideology factory—and not a money machine. "We hope to do in the field," Forbes says, chuckling, "what the Marxists used to call agitprop." Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity's crowning achievement of 1996 was co-sponsoring a "National Satellite Town Meeting on Tax Cuts and Economic Growth." "Over 36,000 grassroots activists," the statement boasts, "watched the hour-long, interactive satellite television program explaining plans to cut taxes and unleash economic growth." In IRS terms, showing this kind of "Amazing Discoveries" Perotfomercials makes Americans for Hope, Growth, and Opportunity a "501(c)(4) issues advocacy group"; in real terms, it's a Forbes advocacy group.

Fund-raising and self-promotion are only the beginning of what unemployment can do for the early presidential hopefuls. Free time is time that can be given away. While candidates still in the running must save their breath for their own compelling needs, those eliminated in the primaries have all the time in the world to speak well of others, and all the incentive, too. Party structures put a premium on loyalty, and he who would be the nominee next time must speak well of the nominee this time—no matter what he may have said a few months earlier. In February, Lamar Alexander warned Republicans that Dole couldn't beat Clinton; in October, he told America Dole couldn't lose. Steve Forbes's negative ads kept Dole from building up momentum during the primary and may have cost him states like Arizona and New Hampshire; but, when Dole decided on a big tax cut, Forbes came on board both to plan and to promote the fairer-flatter theme: his post-election fax brags of "over 430 events" in forty states since June. Admittedly it didn't work, and Forbes today laments that the Dole campaign "didn't get the message across" and "never developed a consistent theme." But those failures were not Forbes's fault (and they weren't the fault of Jack Kemp either, Forbes is quick to say). Forbes gets party credit for good soldiering; all the blame goes to Dole.

With seventeen days on the road with the Dole-Kemp campaign and twenty-nine with other GOP candidates, Alexander trumped everyone in the loyalty sweepstakes, even finding time to attend Dole's otherwise depressingly underattended election night party—an affair that almost anyone who could miss, missed. Not having skewered the majority leader in the primary, and having inherited his PAC, Quayle had less to prove; but he still put himself at the national party's disposal, campaigning frenetically in tight races nationwide: ninety events in thirty states in sixty-four days.

So the divided Republican Party already has, in all but name, three candidates from three different factions for the 2000 nomination. Alexandrian moderates, Quayle's social conservatives and Forbes flat-taxers are already mobilizing for the campaign. They have three years to build beyond these bases. But it may not be enough of a head start—or, rather, it may be too much. The sobering fact is that, in the next 1,400 days, it's entirely possible that something of political consequence will happen. In such an event, it's the politicians in office who can actually do something about it, who will win the public's attention—not the full-time candidates, no matter how much they travel, talk and spend. We hope. •

ON THE HILL

NEWEST NEWT

By Hanna Rosin

Newt Gingrich lumbered toward the podium, stood still for a moment and choked back tears, a dramatic entrance that reporters writing about the speaker's re-election speech last week could not resist noting. Humbled, weary, his eyes somber, the speaker vowed he was a changed man: "So we find ourselves here with a Democratic president and a Republican Congress, and we have an absolute moral obligation to make this system work," he swore. "Together, we are in fact going to find common ground." Gone was last year's "confrontation Congress." It would be replaced by what Gingrich dubbed "The Implementation Congress."

Around the Capitol, iron wills were melting. "It sounds like message received," said a stunned Peter King, the GOP congressman who only days earlier had been calling for Gingrich to resign the speaker's seat. "Our problem was with his tone, and he seems to have changed that." The press purred. "Bittersweet," "poignant," "wise," "chastened," were the adjectives of choice. "A KINDER, GENTLER GINGRICH," read one headline.

The press nuzzled up to the New Newt, perhaps out of guilt for having pounded him, or because the story lends itself so well to clichés (Neutron Newt Suffers Meltdown). But if they had checked their archives, reporters would have found that the New Newt story is what they call a hardy perennial—or more like a quadrennial. Every few years, after a long fit of unbridled ranting, Gingrich disappears for a while, then returns chastened, swearing he is a new man, a tamed man, a man of bipartisan instincts. Then, in a matter of months, sometimes weeks, the infernal machine starts to crackle, first in Tourettic outbursts, until it eventually erupts in a grand explosion.

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Reflect.

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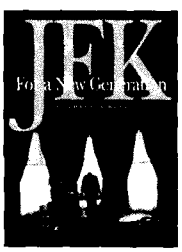

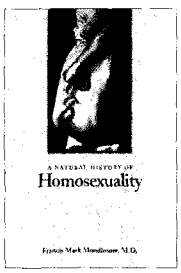

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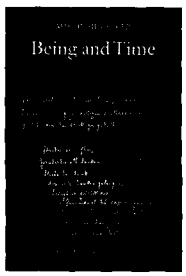

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The Quotable Einstein
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"At the risk of disappointing those who were hoping for grenades in the halls, bombs in the Rotunda and mines in the House, let me stress that the most important fact about the whip election is that it was not a narrow triumph of ideological conservatives," Gingrich wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed in 1989, a week after he was elected minority whip. If the Democrats agreed, the new whip declared himself open to "fair, honest, bipartisanship."

It took only a month for Gingrich to let loose again, baying on the House floor about the "degenerate" Speaker Jim Wright. Even when Wright resigned, he would not relent. During Wright's resignation speech, he kept his hands jammed in his pockets, then stormed out to holler at reporters that Wright had "insulted ... every decent person in this House." Later, he vowed: "I'm out to break the Democratic machine."

NEWT GINGRICH BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Gingrich calmed down after Thomas Foley was elected the new Democratic speaker and publicly called for a truce. "Geez, this guy's actually going to be fair," he said on Foley's first day. He praised the new leadership as a "first-rate team." On one of his zoo visits, he declined to make donkey jokes, calling it "part of my new bipartisan approach." (He was not joking.) "It will only dawn on us over the next few months how different this era is," he added solemnly.

Well, a few months passed, and Hyde was back. At a press breakfast, Gingrich pounded on "eight to ten" Democratic congressmen who should be investigated for ethics violations. Then an aide in his office leaked the infamous "Foley—Out of the Liberal Closet" memo, which compared the speaker to his openly gay colleague Barney Frank. Gingrich called the memo "stupid" in public, but, at a private Republican National Committee meeting, he was less contrite. "When you hear somebody say 'Let's fire Lee Atwater,' " he began, referring to the consultant who drafted the memo, "they aren't any friends of ... the Republican Party.... They are ... left wingers," he thundered. "You're going to see weird things coming out of this city over the next few years because you're watching the death throes of a machine, and you're watching its power to.... intimidate."

The pattern runs deeper. "That was the old me," began a quote from Gingrich in a *Washington Post* profile called "ABRASIVE POINT MAN TALKS OF CHANGING HIS TONE AND TACTICS" that ran in 1985. "Abrasive, confrontational. You'll see a change now." That was in January. In April, Gingrich forced a shutdown of the House when Democrats seated their candidate in a disputed Indiana election. Mocking the "bipartisan buddy system," he said: "Before I came here the Democrats and Republicans played golf, and the Democrats came off the course and beat [their] brains out. Now Republicans feel it is legitimate for them to do the same."

Gingrich is not the only mossback going soft. This election season, he-men of both parties were taught by overactive pollsters never, ever to offend the gentle ladies of the sensible center—hence the content-free, scuffle-free conventions. So they bite their tongues, smile and spread bipartisan goodwill. The Most Daring Makeover Award goes to Congressman Dan Burton, the new head of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee, which will investigate Travelgate, Huanggate, etc. Burton, you may remember, is the one who insisted Vince Foster was murdered, his body dumped in a Virginia park. He once staged a mock murder at his house, shooting a .38 through a fake head to see how far the sound would carry.

Not even the most partisan Republicans were thrilled to see him take charge. So Burton set about convincing the press that he's a nice guy. "On the chair Burton is very fair and as nonpartisan as possible," says his spokesman Kevin Long. "Everyone he's served with on his committees on both sides of the aisle has indicated he's done a very fair job and they've enjoyed it. Just ask them."

In memory of Gary Hart, I did. "You have to be kidding," said one Democrat. "He's like the Bo Gritz of the Hill." Another fumed about Burton's letter to Paul Kanjorski accusing him of sexual harassment after the Pennsylvania Democrat politely interrupted a female lawyer questioning Craig Livingston. The Republicans who

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Ivory-Tower Propositions

[Today's guest columnist is Richard M. Oldrieve. He teaches children with learning disabilities at Marion Sterling Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio. An earlier version of this column appeared in the* Washington Post *on October 21, 1996, and this version is printed with the* Post's *permission.]

We must get away from designing systems that work only with the best of the best.

As a teacher in the Cleveland public schools, I find much to be optimistic about in the short term. Recently, our contract negotiations were settled without a strike, and Cleveland citizens passed the first property-tax increase in 13 years. However, the Ohio experiment that has given 2,000 Cleveland children vouchers so they can use public money to attend private schools makes me fearful, especially since I hear people calling it the wave of the future.

Ever since Milton Friedman introduced vouchers in the 1970s, economists have waxed eloquent about the advantages that a competitive marketplace would bring to the educational community. What economists and business academics always fail to mention is the universally acknowledged downside to the competitive marketplace: Four out of five small businesses go bankrupt in their first five years of operation. What will happen if market schools follow this pattern?

In the business world, when a failed business goes belly-up, the owner declares bankruptcy and finds another job to earn money to pay off the debts. In a world of vouchers, the people who started a failed school will not be the only losers; the students will also pay. They'll probably come to school one day, after several weeks or months of rumors and worsening morale, and find the doors locked. Then what? In most cases, they will need to go back to the public schools they left and try to pick up there. So even if we, as a nation, decide to help students escape flawed urban schools through vouchers, we still must have public schools to take in the free-market refugees.

Voucher advocates may concede my point about failed schools being tough on students, though they will probably mumble something about the price of progress. Then, they'll go on to argue that the whole point of voucher schools is to find out what ideas work best and franchise them to the public schools. The flaw in this logic is that when academics study the successful one out of five businesses, they invariably find an energetic entrepreneur with a vision who is able to recruit talented employees. (Similarly, if you study a successful magnet school in an urban school district, you will generally find an energetic principal with a vision who recruits talented teachers from other schools in the district.)

But even among the businesses that survive, few are successfully franchised because the original entrepreneur usually designs the business around his or her own creative and recruiting talent. A successful franchise like McDonald's needs to be designed to work with average managers who recruit average employees.

We can't stop marketplace economists and politicians from ignoring these realities and touting voucher schools as the answer to all our problems. But if we really mean to solve these problems, I suggest that teachers, school administrators, education professors, business leaders, politicians, and the public focus their energies on developing educational reforms that are designed to work with average principals, average teachers, students from impoverished backgrounds, and parents who, for whatever reason, won't or can't enroll their children in a magnet, charter or voucher school.

We must stop arguing about ivory-tower propositions that are designed to win a few education professors tenure and a few politicians an election.

We must stop the illusory debates that fool a few urban parents into believing a $2,000 "scholarship" will allow them to enroll their children in an elite prep school when, in many instances, the voucher wouldn't even pay tuition at such a school for the month of September (assuming the school admitted the kid in the first place).

We must stop pretending that private schools are cheaper for any reason other than lower teacher salaries when, in Ohio, for example, the state pays private school transportation and special education costs and, in the case of religious schools, the sponsoring church pays the financial administration and building maintenance costs.

We must stop pretending that private schools are better when almost every study that matches and tracks children from similar socioeconomic backgrounds finds that private and public schools yield substantially the same results.

Yes, there are huge problems with urban education, but solutions won't be found by ignoring the problems of the marketplace. In order for our current generation of students to succeed, we must get away from designing systems that work only with the best of the best and start designing schools that will succeed with the 95 percent of the principals, teachers, students, and parents who currently depend on our inner-city schools.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address Mr. Shanker at AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1996 by Albert Shanker. Visit the AFT web site (http://www.aft.org).

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served with him were no kinder. "He's a junkyard dog," said one. "It's partisanship of the worst sort."

Then there's Henry Gonzalez, the Texas Democrat famous for punching out men who cross him (the last time was ten years ago, when he was 70). In the last session, Gonzalez was the ranking member of the Banking Committee, but his wife's illness and his age often kept him away. A Democratic steering committee recommended he step aside and become leader "emeritus." Gonzalez resisted, but instead of jabbing, he whimpered. "All I can do is appeal to you," he pleaded in a speech that several members later described as "poignant" and "moving." "I appeal to your sense of justice and fairness." He had Jesse Jackson Jr. nominate him for symbolic effect and promised to retire next term. That did it. "We hugged afterwards," recalls John LaFalce, the Democrat who would have won the seat. "His staff hugged. I feel magnificent today. I don't want Henry to suffer."

As it happens, the kindness is also strategic. "We could get challenged by [Bruce] Vento next term," says spokesman Gary Luczak, "but the kibosh is pretty much on that one because of his performance yesterday. It pays to be nice." Or at least to look like you are. This year, that's one thing both sides actually do agree on. •

BERLIN POSTCARD

THE UNDEAD

By Christian Caryl

The career of Jörg Behm, an affable and energetic East Berliner in his mid-30s, is a tribute to the regenerative powers of capitalism. I found Mr. Behm, more or less at random, by dialing the first East Berlin number under the listing "DETECTIVE AGENCIES" in the Berlin Yellow Pages. He received me in a small office crammed with business books and monumental mahogany furniture. A framed copy of his 1985 diploma in criminology from an East Berlin university hung on the wall. There were also two vertical glass cases ostentatiously filled with the trappings of the private surveillance trade (camera lenses, tape recorders, microphones, mysterious chemicals in glass vials). Mr. Behm wants his customers to know that they are in professional hands.

In his former life, Behm worked for the East German Ministry of State Security, commonly known as "the Stasi," in a department whose main assignment was making life miserable for opponents of the communist system. For a while, his job included research into forensic techniques for storing and cataloguing the body odors given off by opponents of the regime. Toward the end of 1989, when it became obvious that the government security industry in East Germany was in for some serious downsizing, Behm began casting around for another job. In 1990, he found one in an idea that was then a radical notion in East Germany: private-sector spying. That year, Behm and several friends joined to form one of the new East Germany's first private detective agencies. It was a brilliant career move. The service sector in East Germany scarcely existed at the time, and was poised to boom. The private security industry—detective agencies, home security systems and the like—was particularly ripe for expansion: the citizens of East Germany suddenly owned property, which they were suddenly interested in protecting. For this natural demand, Behm could offer a natural, abundant supply: all of his fellow unemployed spies, tails and musclemen. And, Behm says that Stasi officers (the younger ones, at least) make ideal entrepreneurs. "Running agents is basically a selling job," says Behm. "You have to convince people. Whether you're selling ideology or insurance is pretty much irrelevant—except that you can sell insurance for yourself."

Behm's tale of Thatcherist pluck represents the unlikely dénouement of what once threatened to become an epic mess. During the twelve turbulent months between Erich Honecker's abdication and the merging of the Germanies, security officials in what was then the west publicly agonized over the problem of absorbing 90,000 career Stasi officers into the nervous democracy of the Federal Republic. Revelations of Stasi power and efficiency stunned the world, and in Germany the realization soon dawned that the Stasi penetration of society extended to the west as well, where hundreds of politicians, journalists and intelligence officials were unmasked as agents. As late as 1991, the head of Bonn's domestic intelligence service, Eckart Werthebach, was warning journalists that "former East German state security people should not be isolated from society." The Stasi might have surrendered their weapons during East Germany's peaceful revolution, he argued, but they were highly trained military officers who retained formidable conspiratorial skills and a nasty network of contacts.

Subsequent experience in other post-communist societies has justified such worries. Countries from Albania to Poland, most of which chose to keep files closed and secret police officers safe from prosecution, continue to be buffeted by scandals turning on the real or imaginary influence of renegade spooks on the affairs of state. The legacy of the KGB has mired Russia in corruption and conspiracy. Measured by these standards, the peaceful dissolution of the most powerful security apparatus in the East Bloc and the integration of its members into the society of the Federal Republic is one of the least-publicized successes of German unification.

Yet stories like Behm's naturally leave former opponents of the East German system distinctly uneasy. The number of Stasi men who have been prosecuted for their activities in the old regime is minuscule, and last

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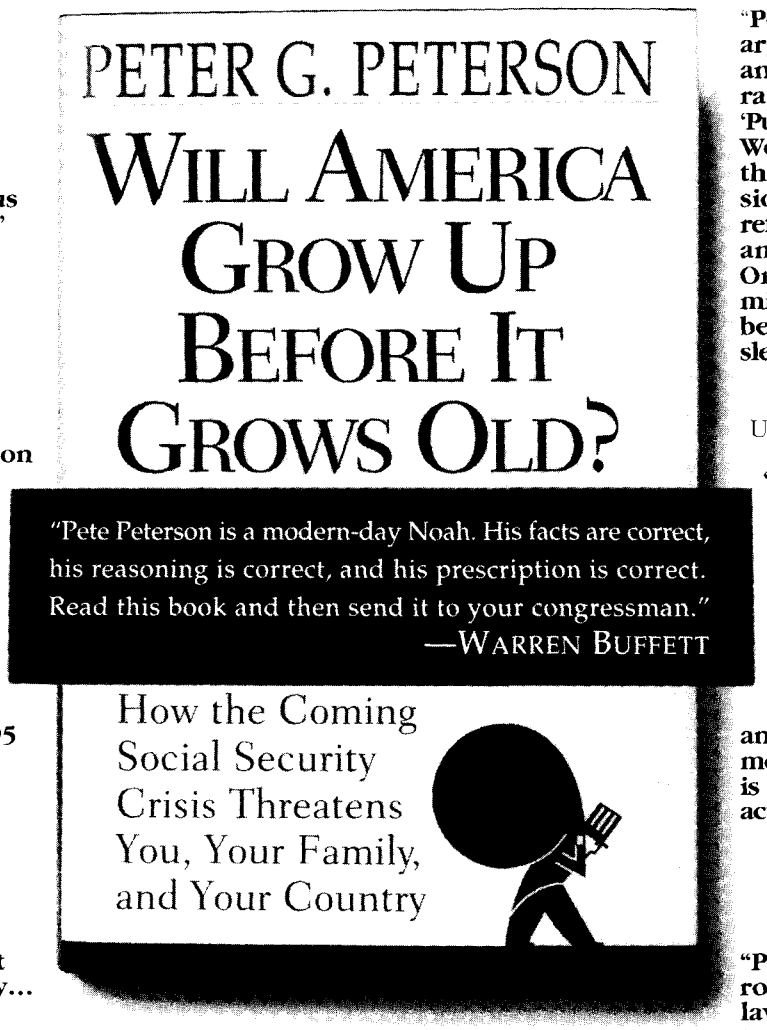
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year the German supreme court proclaimed what amounted to an amnesty for Stasi agent-runners. One beneficiary of the decision was Markus Wolf, the famous spymaster whose agents penetrated the inner workings of every ministry in Bonn. The court ruling foiled prosecutors' long-running efforts to put Wolf behind bars, and for the time being he remains free, sprucing up his income with the royalties from a much-publicized cookbook called *Mysteries of the Russian Kitchen.*

The main problem in bringing Stasi men to task is the *Rückwirkungsverbot,* a constitutional provision that prevents retroactive application of West German law to those who worked within the East German system—meaning that East Germans can only be brought to court today for breaking East German laws. However sound the principles behind such legal niceties, they have led to profound disillusionment. The former East German dissident Bärbel Bohley gives the problem one of its pithier formulations: "We wanted justice and instead we got the rule of law." Thomas Rogalla, a former official at the Gauck Authority, the federal department that now administers the Stasi archives, notes ruefully: "The law just isn't up to the task of coping with a totalitarian regime."

Gauck Authority officials who travel through former East German provinces are frequently confronted by angry citizens who point out that local Stasi men are doing better than they are. As another Gauck Authority official explains: "They say, 'I'm unemployed and yet so-and-so on our street, who served with the Ministry for State Security, has an excellent job.'" The Stasi men were always an elite, a group that benefited from opportunities for training and education of which many Easterners could only dream. Today nearly everyone in eastern Germany seems to have a story about the neighborhood Stasi man with a well-paying job as an insurance salesman, financial consultant or lawyer. "The market economy is not so political," says Mr. Behm. "It's your performance that counts."

The resulting bitterness among those whose lives were once ruined by the Stasi is understandable. But the human rights activists tend to forget their own triumphs. It was they who successfully pleaded for a policy of public access to the Stasi archives—against the opposition of the security experts, who wanted to throw away the key in the name of "social peace." The revelations of betrayal that followed—stories of friends informing on friends, husbands spying on wives—triggered a process of national soul-searching that continues today, unabated. And, partly as a result of that process, Stasi alumni have been virtually banned from the civil service, a category that in Germany extends not only to government administrators but also to teachers, museum directors and police—even streetcar drivers and gardeners in public parks.

This prohibition, as the most tangible reminder that they were actually on the losing end of the cold war, rankles former Stasi men no end—but it is the other vital component of Germany's relative success in downsizing the communist security apparatus. A secret policeman barred from access to the flow of bureaucratic information is a programmer without a computer. Ulrich Schröter, a church representative who organized a public forum for former dissidents and the Stasi men who once dogged them, observes: "Just imagine: one day your archive is occupied and suddenly you have no more access to paper. All you can do is float there in the air, helpless." In a way, former Stasi men like Jörg Behm have succeeded in the private sector to the extent that Germany has succeeded in keeping them out of the public sector.

Meanwhile, for the older generation of Stasi men, those who, unlike the resilient Behm, have been unable to make the transition to a new way of life, the result has usually been early retirement. According to Kurt Zeiseweis, a once high-ranking officer in his early 60s, "The majority of my former colleagues just want to be left alone." (Though some do find comfort by banding together: in the last few years, several Stasi alumni societies have sprung up to lobby for the restoration of pensions that were cut after unification and to offer former spies an outlet for reminiscence.)

To talk to Mr. Zeiseweis is to be reminded of the serious mischief he and his old *Kameraden* might still be up to. A wiry man with white hair and intense blue eyes, Zeiseweis has been through four jobs since unification. Now he prefers to ride his racing bike and ponder the mistakes that led to the collapse of his former employer and the worldview that inspired it. But when you ask him whether the Stasi would have been as gentle if its side had won the cold war, Zeiseweis answers without hesitation. "No, absolutely not. We would have been much tougher. Definitely." In the event of war with NATO, Zeiseweis was slated to become head of the Stasi district in the swankiest neighborhood of West Berlin.

CHRISTIAN CARYL is a writer and translator who divides his time between Berlin and Moscow.

Another pol turns pitchman.

AD AND SUBTRACT

By Stephen Glass

As the man to refurbish Bob Dole's image, Andrew Dalsass might not seem like an especially promising candidate. An obscure 31-year-old advertising art director, Dalsass specializes in low-brow humor. He says the best ad concept he ever came up with was for Greenberg Kirshenbaum, a New York headhunting firm. The text under a picture of a scoffing man reads: "Thanks, Greenberg. I went from a low-paying job that sucked to a high-paying job that sucks." The firm thought the ad sucked, and rejected it.

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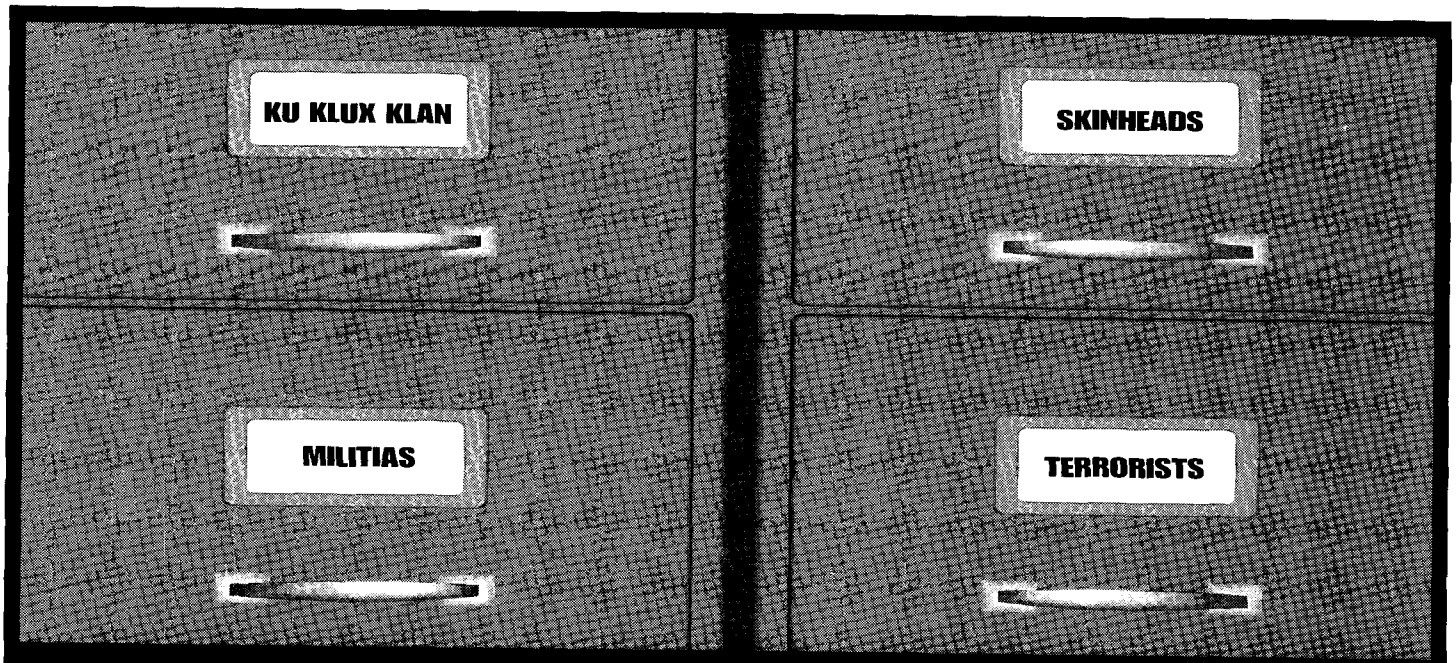

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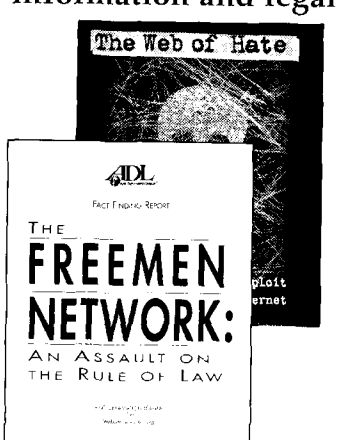

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So when Dalsass and fellow copywriter Ward Parker were hired by Air France to design a spot promoting the airline's special weekend rate to Paris, they were stumped. "We're bizarre ... [we're not] in anal ad mode," Dalsass says. After hours of brainstorming, the best that Dalsass and Parker could come up with for the Washington market was "Get Away from the Investigations."

Around lunchtime, the conversation turned to presidential losers. Half-joking, they proposed putting the Air France pitch over a picture of Bob Dole waving. The headline read: "Not doing anything?" The copy below added: "If you have a little time on your hands, there's never been a better reason for a getaway to Paris." They thought no one, not their boss, not Air France, and certainly not Bob Dole, would go for the ad. A few days later, Dole approved it to run in seven major newspapers. "I'm still in shock," says Dalsass.

He shouldn't have been so taken aback. In an ever-accelerating tackiness sweepstakes, losing politicians are increasingly lending their names and images to product endorsements. A year after her failed bid at the vice presidency, Geraldine Ferraro hawked Diet Pepsi. Dan Quayle has endorsed Wavy Lay's potato chips. Mario Cuomo and Ann Richards have advertised Doritos. In fact, the only really surprising thing about the Air France ad is that Dole allowed a *Wayne's World*-gone-Madison-Avenue designer like Dalsass to engineer his advertising debut. In American politics, the loser's entry into commercial advertising has become one of the new traditions of celebrityhood, the political equivalent of the Super Bowl winners' "I'm going to Disney World." The point of the losing candidate's ad is the same as the sports victor's—to re-establish the celebrity as one of us, a fellow member of the viewing audience. The key difference, though, is that, where the sports ad is triumphant, the political loser's ad is pathetic.

Bill Taylor, a retired creative director of advertising giant Ogilvy & Mather, blames himself for this trend. The advertising genius behind the "Do You Know Me?" campaign for American Express, Taylor broke an unwritten rule of advertising back in 1975 when he used a politician, William E. Miller, Barry Goldwater's unmemorable running mate, in the campaign's most successful spot. Miller's son says he remembers his father deliberating for a long time over whether it would be right to do an ad. Finally, "because this was so many years later, and only really poking fun at himself, he thought it'd be okay."

In Dole's case, it took less than a month to decide—and, so far, apparently, he's been happy with the results. One Dole campaign staffer says the morning the Air France ad ran, his Washington office received ten times the number of calls it had averaged the three days before. "He wants to be talked about again," the staffer says. "What he really wants now is for people to know he's not a bad guy." Sure enough, last Friday Dole met with the New York super-agents at IMG. The firm, which manages marquee celebrities and sports stars such as Martina Navratilova, specializes in getting endorsement contracts. Joyce Campbell, Dole's deputy press secretary, says Dole is already considering at least one more ad. "This is a wonderful, wonderful way to see the real Bob Dole," Campbell says.

But should someone who just weeks ago was asking the country to elect him president slip so easily into peddling cut-rate airline tickets? Campbell responds that Dole is donating his $3,000 fee to a community center for the elderly. Dole's staff points out that Kathleen Hall Jamieson, the dean of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School and ubiquitous judge of campaign ads, agrees with them. She told *The New York Times*, Dole "is entitled to do whatever he wants as long as it's not illegal, immoral or fattening."

That may be true, but the politicians themselves seem a little embarrassed, a little eager to protest that what they're doing isn't exactly advertising. Take Cuomo. In the 1995 Super Bowl spot, he and Richards are munching on Doritos as they pack up her office. When Richards mentions the new look of the Doritos package—who wouldn't at such a moment?—Cuomo says: "I think we ought to accept this change, embrace it, be positive about it, because change can be very exciting." The announcer then intones: "This year's big change is Doritos. More great taste, brand-new bag." Sound like a pitch? Not according to Cuomo. At a Silicon Valley conference that June, Cuomo explained, "I never said a thing about the product.... You never heard me say, 'Eat a Dorito and it'll make you beautiful.' Or, 'Eat a Dorito, it'll make you're hair grow.' " And Ferraro? She comes a little closer to honesty, actually admitting that she did the Diet Pepsi ad because she needed the money. But then she constructs a bizarre defense: in her ad, she never actually touched the product.

Dole's demurral—the fact that he's donating his fee—may be the lamest of all. There's a certain realism about a cash-strapped politician doing a one-time spot for the money; public service really doesn't pay as much as the private sector. But playing the spot as a charity stint is insincere. It acknowledges that it's unbecoming for a presidential candidate to turn himself into a shill for an airline, while insisting that donating the money transforms the pitch into a virtuous act.

And, worse, it is *sad*. Bob Dole, turning himself into joke fodder for the likes of Letterman, the "Saturday Night Live" half-wits and Air France—he had to do this? So people would think he was a nice guy? He didn't care if people thought he was a nice guy when the presidency was at stake, or at least he didn't care enough about it to win. Why couldn't he have gone out as he was, the last unreconstructed pre-media man?

Michael Dukakis, who regularly turns down offers to advertise, groans when he hears Dole's excuse. "Isn't anything beyond the pale? Come on," he says, from his office at Northeastern University, where he answers his own phone. "I do charity, like public-service announcements. Why can't [candidates] just return to life?" Of course, Dukakis's phone doesn't ring all that often. •

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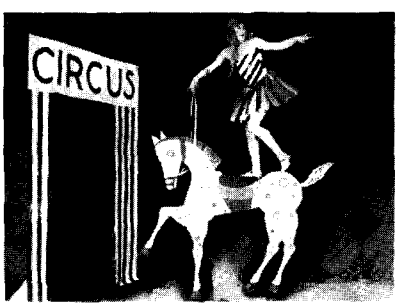

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The new budget bad guys: corporations.

WELFARE QUEENS

By Jonathan Chait

In January 1994, Robert Shapiro of the Progressive Policy Institute issued a report denouncing wasteful federal subsidies to corporations. Like most products of Washington's think tanks, it mainly gathered dust. Ten months later, after the 1994 elections, Labor Secretary Robert Reich approvingly cited Shapiro's work in a speech. But he employed a new term for the phenomenon of business subsidies: corporate welfare.

There instantly ensued a particularly Washington sort of bliss, that moment of flowering when an idea finds its catchphrase. Congressmen ranging from übercapitalist Dick Armey to retro-socialist Bernie Sanders took to the House floor to denounce corporate welfare. Policy shops from Ralph Nader's *Essential Information* to the Heritage Foundation cranked out corporate welfare studies. Sensible-centrists like David Broder and *The New York Times* editorial page adopted corporate welfare as their litmus test of budgetary seriousness. This fall, as Congress and the White House begin the search for that which they know in the ledgers of their hearts doesn't exist—an easy-money fix to the unbalanced budget—corporate welfare has emerged as the bogeyman of choice. Recently, House Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich convened an unlikely coalition of right-wing think tanks (the Heritage Foundation and the Competitive Enterprise Institute) and left-wing interest groups (Public Citizen, Friends of the Earth) to compile an enemies list of federal business subsidies. The White House, meanwhile, has pronounced corporate welfare cuts likely common ground with congressional Republicans. "If we ever get close to a budget deal," predicts a senior White House aide, "that might be the area to fill the gap."

Why the bipartisan love-in? Opposition to corporate welfare allows politicos both left and right to win points for integrity while secretly indulging their more base instincts. Liberals can demonstrate their willingness to cut spending while socking it to wealthy corporations. Conservatives get to show that they can stand up to fat cats while remaining true to the faith of the free market. And everyone is entranced by the notion that the federal government can painlessly balance its budget merely by liposuctioning government pork out of the bloated corpus of American business.

Corporate welfare foes seem to have everything going for them: bipartisanship, political courage, progressivity, tough-mindedness. Is it too good to be true? Well, sure.

The first clue is the ever-rising series of estimates of how much corporate welfare exists. Shapiro's original study suggested under $23 billion a year in cuts. Reich cited about $45 billion. A subsequent CATO study offered up more than $87 billion in annual savings. A three-part *Boston Globe* series this past summer tagged the cost of corporate welfare at $150 billion a year. Whenever you see this sort of rampant optimism—whether you are talking about corporate welfare or personal welfare or a curve drawn on a cocktail napkin—it is a signal that the fix is in for another rosy scenario.

So how much corporate welfare does the budget contain? Strictly speaking, none. While the government subsidizes plenty of businesses, it doesn't provide a helping hand for businesses that fall on hard times in the same way it does for individuals. The government does employ taxes and spending to encourage firms to engage in behavior it deems salutary, like environmental conservation or research and development. These subsidies, in other words, are intended to help society. Some do. Others, of course, are boondoggles. Properly understood, the term "corporate welfare" is shorthand for identifying the boondoggles. Unfortunately, corporate welfare foes don't see it quite that way.

Their case is ultimately based on the notion that the government should never help profitable corporations. It's easy to see why, say, Ralph Nader would go for this kind of thinking. But it has even sucked in groups that normally ridicule economic populism. CATO, for example, rails against "subsidies for the *Fortune* 500." The fallacy in this critique is the assumption that the only beneficiaries of business subsidies are the immediate beneficiaries.

To be fair, the argument does get slightly more sophisticated than that. Markets are good at allocating capital. Therefore, anti-corporate welfare conservatives contend, when the government gives firms more money than they've been granted by the invisible hand, it makes the market work less efficiently.

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Yes, fear of favoritism is a reason to oppose business subsidies. But it's not a *sufficient* reason. Even economics textbooks recognize compelling reasons for the government to play favorites occasionally. So why do you benefit by sending your tax dollars to some corporate suite? Because there are things that companies do besides add to the Gross National Product. They're called externalities. They can be good for society (training workers) or bad (polluting the air). Corporate subsidies are designed to encourage good externalities or discourage bad ones.

The classic example of a good externality is research and development. Society has a strong interest in higher R&D spending. But individual companies don't, necessarily. For one thing, though basic research pays off over the long term, corporations have to answer to stockholders concerned with quarterly profits. For another, when a company makes a breakthrough in basic research it eventually has to share the new technology with its competitors. Thus, the sum total of every business's interest in R&D spending is less than the nation's as a whole. That's why every advanced country subsidizes R&D. And since it is corporations that implement new technology, subsidizing those corporations, while less egalitarian than distributing research grants to the poor, is the only way to increase R&D.

So why can't we keep the R&D subsidies and just junk the bad stuff? Because, according to the corporate welfare sniffers, R&D *is* the bad stuff. CATO's list of the thirty-five "least defensible" corporate welfare programs is studded with R&D, like Sematech (which cultivates semiconductor development) or the Advanced Technology Program (more on that later).

And when you go beyond the R&D entries on the list, looking for the really shameful items (the corporate equivalent of, say, Ronald Reagan's Cadillac-driving "welfare queen"), most of the boondoggles aren't so obvious. The Conservation Reserve Program, for instance, pays farmers to take ecologically sensitive land out of production. Sure, it's run inefficiently. Poor management of the decade-old program has prompted taxpayers to shell out big money for land of dubious environmental merit. But it still gives the public some value and could be reformed. If this ranks among the worst examples of corporate welfare, then taxpayers don't have much to be angry about.

The best argument against R&D subsidies is that the legislative process corrupts them; lawmakers will support programs based on political expediency rather than technological promise. But if that's right then efforts to *cut* subsidies will also be corrupted; Congress will slash the programs that lack clout instead of those that lack merit. Take the aforementioned Advanced Technology Program, which offers companies grants to develop high-risk technologies that lack short-run profit potential. In 1994, Republicans became convinced that the Clinton administration intended it as pork to buy the support of high-technology companies. Bob Walker, who as chairman of the House Science Committee sought to eliminate the ATP, cited a CATO finding that ATP recipients all donated to the Democratic Party. (Which is true. However, the report neglected to mention that they also contributed to Republicans, and more generously.) "ATP gets beat up because it's clean," argues Charles Wessner, who served as director of international technology policy in the Bush administration. "It doesn't put pork into some senator's backyard."

Still, the basic claim of the corporate welfare argument—that the government doles out plenty of useless subsidies—is true. It should be possible, then, to find out which ones those are and axe them, right? Maybe, but the early maneuvering suggests that even the fattest Butterballs aren't likely to reach the chopping block anytime soon.

Kasich's corporate welfare coalition, for instance, has decreed that it won't endorse any corporate welfare cuts unless every member agrees to them. The group intended this policy to rule out all but the most wasteful of subsidies. Instead, the unanimity rule is having the odd effect of guaranteeing that the most wasteful subsidies remain. It turns out that almost half of the corporate subsidies in Shapiro's original corporate welfare report are administered through the tax code. But the right-leaning organizations participating in the coalition maintain that tax loopholes cannot be corporate welfare. "A lot of people get confused with the [corporate welfare] concept," explains Leila Bate of Citizens for a Sound Economy, who is helping Kasich compile his list. "They think it includes provisions that let people keep more of their own money." Come again? Consider two hypothetical subsidies. Under the first program, the federal government provides a $1,000 check to any company that produces a red jeep. Under another, it offers a $1,000 tax cut to any company that produces a red jeep. Asked if Citizens for a Sound Economy would, indeed, want Congress to kill the red jeep spending subsidy but sustain the red jeep tax subsidy, Bate pauses. Dogma and reason collide. The battle is as quick as it is terrible. She flatly replies, "Yes."

So Congress has effectively ruled out closing tax loopholes. Yet the tax code offers the most egregious examples of corporate welfare. Congress must approve spending subsidies annually. Tax subsidies, on the other hand, remain forever unless specifically changed. In 1918, seeking to bolster fuel production for the war effort, the Treasury Department instituted special tax breaks for oil companies. If it had instead handed out the cash directly, and then had to reconsider the effects every year, the subsidy would no doubt have expired decades ago. But the tax break is still with us, providing a few very wealthy oil companies with a societally useless windfall at the public's expense.

The popularity of anti-corporate welfare rhetoric is a testament to its meaninglessness. If it took real courage to rail against corporate welfare, then everybody wouldn't be doing it. •

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SCANDAL-SHY

By William Powers

In 1972, incumbent President Richard Nixon easily won re-election against a challenger who never became a serious threat. Throughout the summer and fall of that year, *The Washington Post* dug relentlessly into the story that would eventually destroy the second Nixon administration, but the rest of the establishment press wasn't paying much attention. In particular *The New York Times*, which then set the agenda for television news (as it often still does today), gave little indication in its coverage that there might be serious trouble ahead. As Election Day drew near, CBS News put together two long pieces on Watergate for its evening news show, each to run on a different night. Both were ambitious attempts to make sense of the various allegations and revelations about Nixon's administration and campaign organization, as uncovered, largely, by the *Post*. Presented by the most trusted journalist of the time, Walter Cronkite, the first explained that the story was still partly "allegation, uncovered by the press but as yet legally unsubstantiated.... But with the facts and the allegations we shall try tonight to pull together the threads of this amazing story, quite unlike any in modern American history...." After the segment ran, Nixon aides began pressuring top CBS executives to keep the second part off the air. CBS caved, in part, cutting the second installment from its original fourteen minutes down to eight. Still, the network had produced one of the few good Watergate primers voters got from the establishment press, despite the fact that the Watergate scandal was about to turn society inside out. According to David Halberstam, who wrote about the incident in *The Powers That Be*, after the election Nixon added CBS to his enemies list.

What mattered in 1972 was not so much what the media did as what they didn't do. This year, the story is much the same. The conventional view of the 1996 race is that it was both transparent—the choice, such as it was, was placed clearly before the voters—and exceedingly boring: Clinton lapped Dole early on the economy, and the hapless challenger didn't have a prayer of catching up. In this view, the voters knew all that they needed to about both candidates and, in particular, about what the press gently referred to as the "character issues" surrounding the incumbent Clinton. They had long ago realized that Clinton was not terribly honest, that he had a history of dalliances with women, that he had probably done something wrong in the scandal known as Whitewater, and that he had probably covered up what he had done. They accepted all this and chose Clinton over Dole anyway, for rational reasons.

This view may be true. But it is also true that the establishment media coverage of the Clinton "character issues" did not do in 1996 what it did not do in 1972. Again, it was a case not so much of the scandal stories that did run as those that didn't. No one can say the press was silent on Filegate, or that the networks didn't send anyone to Arkansas for the trial of Jim and Susan McDougal. These and many other Clinton ethics stories—and some Dole ethics stories as well—got covered. But, by and large, the mainline media did not focus intense, sustained attention on the stories that could have been most threatening to the president's chances of re-election. The major news organizations played the story, but they played it mostly down. When *The New York Times* or ABC News wants to arouse public concern over an issue, it covers the story in a very particular way. Editors and reporters work to develop fresh angles on the story day after day, and these developments, real or not, are played prominently, even breathlessly. This is how *The Washington Post* covered Watergate, and it is how the media in general covered Whitewater in 1993. It is not what happened in 1996. The Clinton scandal stories—the Paula Jones case that is heading to the Supreme Court, the investigation by independent counsel Kenneth Starr into an array of possible criminal acts involving the president, his wife and close associates, the congressional investigations—became the dogs that didn't bark, or at least were not made to bark very loudly or very long. In 1996, scandal went out of fashion.

According to the Center for Media and Public Affairs, a nonpartisan think thank that has been studying television coverage of this campaign, between September 2 and November 4, ABC, CBS and NBC ran a total of sixty-two stories that featured at least one Clinton ethics problem, from Whitewater to Indo-gate. That's an average of about one story a day for all the networks combined—not much in the re-election campaign of a president with multiple ethics problems.

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Database searches produce more print journalism stories, naturally, but, with notable exceptions—such as an extensive analysis of Hillary Clinton's various ethics problems by David Maraniss and Susan Schmidt of *The Washington Post*—few were broad in scope or given top billing. More common was the glancing reference, the perfunctory update that got lost in coverage of what the media defined as the *real* issues in this race.

The *Times* is a signal case in point. As part of its campaign coverage, beginning last summer the *Times* ran a massive series of articles—some on the front page—examining in great detail Clinton's record on crime, foreign policy, civil rights, welfare, etc. But there was no major article in the series on the president's ethics problems, though there were enough investigations and legal proceedings underway to easily fill a dozen lengthy articles. Instead, on November 3, two days before the election, the *Times*, taking its cue from ethics offensives by both Dole and Ross Perot, published (on page 36) a chart summarizing in 329 words the "ethical issues facing the White House." For each issue there was a brief summary and status report. According to the piece, "Mr. Dole has made ethics a central issue in his final hours of campaigning.... The White House rejects Mr. Dole's accusations as desperate mudslinging by a losing candidate." The tone implies that the scandals were essentially a matter of partisan politicking, discussed only because there was a campaign on.

Between 1992 and 1996, the *Times* news department had pursued Clinton ethics stories quite aggressively, particularly Whitewater. The *Times*'s team of investigative reporters—Jeff Gerth, Stephen Labaton, Stephen Engelberg, Dean Baquet—worked hard to drum up enterprise stories, and broke many. But, during the campaign itself, the paper broke few enterprise stories on Whitewater and tended to underplay those it did run.

On September 24, for instance, *The Washington Post* published a front-page story headlined: "FDIC REPORT SAYS MRS. CLINTON'S WORK WAS USED TO DECEIVE." To a practiced reader of Washington scandal, that was an important headline, particularly in the way it suggested that an arm of the government—not just some reporter and her sources—was implicating the First Lady in shenanigans. The *Post*'s judgment call was routine. A story like this—a straightforward "day" story—based on a publicly issued government report with obvious newsworthy content, is the sort of thing to which leading newspapers automatically give prominent play. But the early editions of the *Times* didn't carry the story. It *did* appear in later editions, though. What happened is an example of the sort of news management that occurs routinely, but of which readers are largely unaware. Every night, after the first edition of each paper is printed, the editors of the *Times* and the *Post* fax each other their front pages for the next day, and then revisit their news judgments. Sometimes they change the story mix on their own front pages, or scramble to play catch-up on an entirely missed story, which can be inserted in later editions. In this case, *Times* editors saw that the *Post* had not only run the FDIC story, but put it out front. The *Times* apparently rushed its own version into print. It ran on page A-18 of later editions, under the somewhat less sizzling headline, "MRS. CLINTON IS LINKED TO PAYMENTS IN DEAL UNDER INVESTIGATION." The byline on the story was Jeff Gerth, the *Times* reporter who broke the Whitewater story in 1992.

The reasons for the establishment press's relative passivity on Clinton ethics or scandal stories in 1996 are complicated. One is that the news media are, despite their reputation for reflexive aggression, generally reactive in the coverage of political scandals. If it is journalists who initially uncover the possible wrongdoing, it is government officials—congressional committees, special prosecutors—who step in once the story is published and who subsequently drive the news, through investigations, hearings and official leaks. When I asked *Times* reporter Stephen Labaton why his newspaper, which broke the Whitewater story, seemed to have lost some interest in it of late, he said that the story was fairly "cyclical" and had been in a slow period because the people in Starr's office had "put their heads down," resulting in less news.

In presidential election years, reporters are reactive in another way. They tend to allow the candidates to set the terms of the coverage. In 1992 both George Bush and Clinton did multiple television interviews in the last weeks of the campaign. This time around, Clinton gave his last television interview on September 23, when Jim Lehrer engaged him on the touchy matter of Whitewater pardons. Clinton's last press conferences before the election was on October 2. But most reporters, rather than saying that Clinton was avoiding them (which would make the them look bad: on the White House beat, access is all), tended to observe that, by keeping himself at a distance, Clinton was adroitly playing it very presidential.

With Clinton unreachable for questions on ethics, reporters generally waited for Dole and Perot to raise the matter—and then delivered the news in the pejorative frame of "negative campaigning." "In a daylong assault on President Clinton's ethics," wrote Katharine Q. Seelye in *The New York Times* on October 9, "Bob Dole turned sharply negative today, raising the specter of White House scandals that he had been avoiding, lacerating Mr. Clinton as someone whose 'word is no good' and blaming him in a commercial for a 'moral crisis.' " This approach to the issue, while accurate and fair, is self-limiting. A charge of misconduct raised by a reporter, based on that reporter's own work, carries considerable weight. The same charge brought up by one of the candidates becomes, for the media's purposes, tainted.

Another, powerful, factor was the pressure that White House and campaign officials brought to bear

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on news organizations working on scandal stories. When the Nixon White House came down on CBS News in an effort to kill the Cronkite Watergate piece, it was considered an extraordinary moment in White House-press relations—a scandal in itself. Today, on the Clinton scandal beat, such interventions are the norm. Chris Vlasto, an investigative producer for ABC News who has done numerous Whitewater pieces, says that two years ago the White House conducted an "unbelievable" campaign of pressure and fear to prevent reporters from doing stories about the state troopers who publicly alleged that Clinton had used them to procure women. Vlasto and other journalists on the scandal beat speak in some awe of a rotating but ever-present cast of White House staff and hired guns who over the years have worked with great diligence to block stories: associate White House counsel Mark Fabiani, outside counsel David Kendall, spinner James Carville, former White House Communications Director Mark Gearan, former Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes, deputy counsel Bruce Lindsey, and of course senior adviser George Stephanopoulos. The Clinton White House's squelching campaign has been unprecedented in its frankness. When, for instance, former FBI agent Gary Aldrich came out with his (admittedly dubious) exposé of the White House, White House officials made no secret of their campaign to dissuade ABC from interviewing Aldrich on air. Similarly, Fabiani was entirely open in his likewise successful efforts to engender sympathetic coverage for the White House's campaign to undercut Starr's investigation by portraying it as part of a right-wing effort to destroy Clinton by any means. The campaign continues. In a November 24 television appearance, former Clinton strategist Carville announced that he was setting up a group to "inform" the public about "the right-wing agenda" of Whitewater counsel Starr, who numbers among his private clients several groups and causes associated with the right.

The White House's campaign has undoubtedly produced results. According to two sources at ABC News, that network's chief Whitewater reporter, Jim Wooten, who had aggressively pursued the story since it broke in 1992, took himself permanently off the beat in protest two years ago, when a piece that he had done on one aspect of the "Troopergate" story was pulled. According to the ABC sources, Wooten's piece was killed after the White House, which had gotten wind of it, protested to Wooten's bosses. One source said that then-"World News Tonight" Executive Producer Rick Kaplan, who is a close friend of the president, personally axed the piece. Wooten, who is now at ABC's London bureau, declined to comment. (In fairness to Kaplan, the ABC source also said that Kaplan generally "bent over backwards" to not let his ties to Clinton influence his news judgment.) At ABC News and elsewhere, the Clinton campaign to discourage coverage of scandal stories has had the effect of constantly reminding reporters that their bosses are watching, and not necessarily approving. "This has been a very, very, very difficult thing for reporters to cover," one reporter told me. "It's been really, really tough. Your career does not flower." *The Washington Post*'s Michael Isikoff left not only the Clinton scandal beat at that newspaper but the paper itself, after a fight with his editors over their resistance to his coverage of the Paula Jones story.

Another administration tactic that has had a chilling effect has been a divide-and-conquer approach, an effort to convince Clinton scandal-beat reporters to ignore the work of other Clinton scandal-beat reporters, on the claim that it is shoddy or off the mark. "The White House has been very good at trying to pit reporters against each other," says one investigative journalist who has covered the Clinton scandals. "I can't tell you how many times they've tried to criticize Sue Schmidt [who has covered Whitewater for *The Washington Post*]. They tried to bash her whenever they could, to other reporters, which I think is unjustified." Schmidt, whose work is widely admired by other journalists, declined to comment.

Why, besides the skill of its practitioners, has the White House "outreach" worked so well? Simply put, because Clinton and his people are, to most journalists, culturally sympathetic. What every conservative press critic preaches, and almost every reporter denies, is largely true: the mainstream press *is* liberal. Most Washington reporters share with the Clinton aides a language, a value system, a set of buttons. Outrage at, say, "partial-birth infanticide" is not one of the buttons of this class. Outrage at "right-wing abortion activists" is. When conservatives huff about the cabal of liberal journalists that is constantly plotting to slant coverage, they are right about the effects but wrong about the cause. There is no plotting at all: liberal bias flows from principles so deeply held they're mostly unconscious. All of which means that, had a Republican president been up for reelection this year, facing the same array of ethical problems Clinton faced, the scandals would have gotten more ink. Recall the alacrity with which the journalism establishment seized on the sexual allegations against Clarence Thomas, John Tower and Bob Packwood.

And this year journalists happened upon a whole new way of making their coverage jibe with their convictions. For more than a decade, ever since the fall of Gary Hart, the profession has been facing a conundrum: how to cover the ethical scandals of politicians who are, in the estimation of most journalists, otherwise great presidential material. Reporting on Hart's womanizing left some journalists feeling guilty, as if they were responsible for denying the nation the leader it really ought to have. The solution: make the whole array of "personal" behavior issues, and the ethics scandals that flow from them, a suspect category.

The ultimate expression of the media's move away from ethics and scandal reporting is the "civic journalism" school of thought that came into full flower this

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year. Though its roots can be traced to the Gary Hart moment, the movement began in earnest only after the 1988 Bush-Dukakis campaign brought us Willie Horton ads and harsh character attacks. In *Breaking the News*, the new bible of civic journalism, James Fallows approvingly cites one journalist who felt that the coverage of that election "made everyone feel dirty when it was done." Newspapers and broadcast outlets that practice civic journalism—and there were a number of additions this year—focus their coverage on the issues that "average" people tell pollsters they care about most. Candidates are asked to answer questions on those issues, which are then given emphasis in the coverage over other subjects—like ethics and "negative" campaigning. At bottom, civic journalists are doing two things: (1) attempting to reclaim audiences that have drifted away from the news, by giving them the coverage they say they want and (2) solving the problem of having to sort out messy ethical matters when they'd rather just think about the candidates' policies.

"On the political scandals, I don't know which ones we missed," said Andrew Rosenthal, Washington bureau chief of *The New York Times*, on a recent Friday morning. I was sitting across the desk from him in his office on the seventh floor of the Army-Navy Club building in downtown Washington. I had asked Rosenthal, an affable 40-year-old whose job is an established proving ground for high posts at *Times* headquarters in New York, for an interview to talk about the paper's campaign coverage. Specifically, I was interested in its work on the various Clinton scandals and ethics problems.

Rosenthal acknowledged that "we were a little slow off the mark" covering the scandal around Democratic Party fund-raiser John Huang. But he noted proudly that, after the *Times* editorial page had endorsed Bill Clinton, the paper ran prominent front-page, above-the-fold news stories about Huang and the Riadys.

On the Paula Jones case, Rosenthal said that after hearing about a piece published in the November issue of *The American Lawyer* magazine, in which writer (and former *Times* reporter) Stuart Taylor Jr. argues that Jones's sexual-harassment suit against President Clinton is much stronger than most people realize, he had asked one of his people to pull up for him all the *Times*'s coverage of Jones. It was, he said, "mostly little tiny stories.... But we did a big piece, two and a half columns or something, when she filed her lawsuit [in 1994]."

The American Lawyer piece was one of those articles that periodically send a little power surge through the journalistic gossip grid. More than that, though, it should have been enough to make Rosenthal and other journalists think twice about their timid coverage of the Paula Jones case. Taylor, who is a lawyer and one of the nation's most respected legal journalists, argues that Jones's evidence "includes clear proof, scattered through the public record, that then-governor Clinton's state trooper-bodyguard interrupted the then-24-year-old state employee on the job on May 8, 1991, and took her to meet Clinton—the boss of Jones's boss—alone in an upstairs suite at Little Rock's Excelsior Hotel, for the apparent purpose of sexual dalliance." The rest of Jones's story is that Clinton repeatedly touched her, tried to kiss her neck, and, having been rejected, then pulled down his pants and asked her to kiss his erect penis, which she also refused to do. Jones says that as she left the hotel room Clinton looked at her "sternly" and said, "You are smart. Let's keep this between ourselves."

Taylor interviewed both of Jones's corroborating witnesses, one of whom says she saw the trooper take Jones away to meet Clinton, and both of whom Jones told about the incident shortly after it allegedly occurred. What most struck me after reading Taylor's persuasive piece was the fact that no establishment news organization had undertaken a similarly searching look at Jones's allegations during Clinton's reelection campaign—even after Taylor's piece ran. Taylor told me *The American Lawyer* sent out his article to "just about every major news organization in the country" on October 24. A smattering of newspapers and television shows treated the piece as minor news, but it didn't make a dent in the national consciousness before Election Day. Yet, if Clinton may well have to stand trial for sexual harassment during his next term, and if the case against him is strong, and if this is—as it certainly seems to be—not a matter of personal behavior but of a possible ethical lapse by Clinton in his capacity as an elected official, isn't that relevant information that the voters should have had as they cast their votes?

I asked Rosenthal if he didn't think it strange that the readers of America's most influential newspaper had not, unless they happened to read *The American Lawyer*, had access to a thorough examination of the Paula Jones case. "Interesting question," he said. "I don't have a very good answer to it." When I pressed him, he added: "We applied the same standards to the Paula Jones case that we applied to all other stories like this," mentioning Donna Rice, Gennifer Flowers and the woman who told the *National Enquirer*, *The Washington Post* and others that she had had an affair with Senator Bob Dole in the late 1960s, during his first marriage.

But those women all willingly had sex with the politician in question, I said. Paula Jones didn't.

"We just don't think that that kind of private behavior is relevant to his public responsibility," Rosenthal replied. But weren't we talking about the behavior of a public official in his capacity as a boss? "It's impossible for me to assess her evidence," said Rosenthal.

Other *Times* sources had already told me that the paper is traditionally squeamish about sex stories and had arguably become more so in the wake of two internal uproars at the paper concerning high-profile stories with sexual content, one about the William

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Kennedy Smith trial, the other about an alleged relationship between Nancy Reagan and Frank Sinatra. Had the culture of the *Times* played a role here?

"Yes, there is a huge *New York Times* culture issue here," Rosenthal said. One factor in this is "our very strong aversion to accusatory stories. You will find, I hope, a great shortage of 'is under investigation stories' [in the *Times*].... And, two, an aversion to personal behavior stories or whatever you want to call them. Sex stories."

Rosenthal removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes. "Your question," he said, "was, did we have a responsibility to remind voters of it before the election? I guess we did not." He added that, if Clinton were to be found guilty of the behavior Jones accuses him of, then it would be a story for *The New York Times*.

For their 1994 study of the media's coverage of the Clinton scandals, *When Should the Watchdogs Bark?*, scholars Larry J. Sabato and S. Robert Lichter interviewed dozens of reporters who had worked on the Whitewater, Troopergate and Paula Jones stories. They found that, although most of the journalists thought the sources for the Clinton sex stories were more credible than the Whitewater sources, they and their news organizations focused on Whitewater. ABC's Brit Hume said of his fellow journalists, "The virtually unanimous view is that Bill Clinton and Paula Jones were in that [hotel] room ... and that he came on to her. I think everybody accepts that." Yet the authors of the study write that Jones and the Arkansas state troopers, who were also substantially believed by journalists, were held to a much higher "threshold of credibility" by the news organizations than were the Whitewater figures.

"By and large the press, I don't think, brought together in any comprehensive way these matters," says Terry Eastland, editor of the conservative *Forbes Media-Critic* magazine. Jeff Cohen, executive director of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a left-leaning media watchdog group, says that what he noticed about the scandal coverage was how much of the campaign-finance coverage of the last few weeks highlighted Clinton's problems and barely mentioned allegations about Dole's own questionable money-raising. But he agrees there has been less coverage of one particular Clinton problem: "If you're talking about Paula Jones, that's very interesting to me. I've always thought it was underplayed."

In the weeks since the election, another reason has emerged for the dearth of scandal reporting. In covering presidential campaigns, the ethics-shy media have learned to wait for a candidate's opponent to dish the dirt before they will cover it. But Dole, who could have hit the president every day on the scandals, and surely raised their profile in the media, was quiet until the very end.

The reason the press gave us for Dole's reluctance, that mudslinging isn't his nature, turns out to be only a partial truth. What the establishment media didn't tell the public was that they were having an extended, and rather tense, backstage conversation with Dole about scandal stories from *his* past. One, which was in the works at *The Washington Post*, concerned an affair Dole had had more than two decades ago, when he was still married to his first wife. The woman had spoken on the record to two *Post* reporters. The Dole campaign argued vigorously to the paper's management that the story was not germane to the campaign, and the paper ultimately agreed (though it later published a strange statement *about* its decision, thus confirming that it had the story). What's interesting about this unpublished story is not so much that the establishment press held back on it. The various accounts I have heard of the *Post*'s decision-making on it suggest that in the end the paper was wise not to publish. If there had been a story floating around concerning an affair that Bill Clinton had had early in his marriage to Hillary, and it did not involve his duties as an elected official or the resources of his office, the *Post* would probably have arrived at the same decision, and it would have been the right one.

No, what is interesting here is the way the media obsessed about this and other rumored stories. For weeks this fall, the cloister was burning up with rumors about not only the stories themselves, but why they were not coming out. In one version, as later reported by Howard Kurtz in the *Post*, some staff members "questioned whether [Executive Editor Leonard] Downie's judgement might be affected by the fact that he was separating from his wife and starting a new relationship."

To people outside the profession, it's a little hard to convey the intensity with which such frivolous theories were bruited about in New York and Washington. The notion that there are different *kinds* of scandal stories, and that some are meaningful and others not, doesn't much figure in such conversations. The public seems to understand this better than the media: when the Dole affair story was reported in *The National Enquirer* it was greeted with a great national yawn. Paula Jones and Donna Rice are not the same story, but they are spoken of by media types as if they were. Watergate and Whitewater are not in fact terribly similar scandals either—though the trajectories of their coverage may be—but the latter is reported in terms suggesting it is Watergate all over again. While the profession obsesses about old extramarital affairs of no public import, a truly important story that many Clinton scandal-beat journalists had known vaguely about for many months—the Riady money—did not emerge until the final hour of the campaign.

Where is Walter Cronkite when we need him? Now the second Clinton term is here and, having been denied the information and analysis they needed to make sense of all the scandals *before* they voted, the people are starting to brace themselves for what's next. It turns out there may be some giant icebergs ahead. No one said so, but they've been there all along, shrouded by a dense fog that is just beginning to burn off. •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Help wanted

Undoubtedly the most widely reviewed book on American social problems this year, and the most widely reviewed book by a sociologist in many decades, is William J. Wilson's *When Work Disappears* (Knopf). Understandably so: it deals with our most painful domestic problem, the condition of the inner-city black poor. How such misery can exist in one of the richest countries in the world is a question foreigners have long asked embarrassed Americans. And it is a question to which few have good answers.

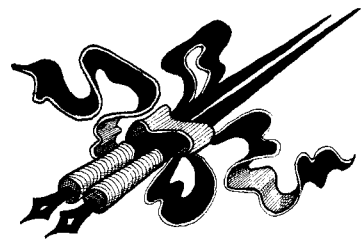
Wilson navigates between the two answers all sensible people try to escape: that this condition can be explained by the inveterate racism of white Americans, or by some basic inferiority of blacks, genetic or cultural. Wilson's explanation, as we all know, is that the manufacturing jobs that once sustained poorly educated black Southern migrants have left Chicago, the site of Wilson's research. There follow all the associated ills of the black inner city.

But what if the premise is defective? What if work has *not* disappeared? As if by design, a new book by another, much less touted sociologist confronts Wilson directly—arguing that work has not disappeared for the inner-city poor. *Still the Promised City?*, asks Roger Waldinger, and his answer is "yes." Waldinger, whose book was published by Harvard University Press this year, has been studying New York. His title reminds us of Moses Rischin's 1962 book on New York's Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *The Promised City*. Today New York is again a great immigrant city, and, despite hardships, immigrants are finding their niches in the city's economy, and rising. Understandably, when people see new immigrants struggling with low-paying jobs and small businesses that demand long hours and give small returns, and still managing to maintain their families and educate their children, they ask: Why not blacks, too?

Manufacturing has indeed declined, in New York as in Chicago, but manufacturing jobs that require no special education still exist. It's just that immigrants, not blacks, get them. Better-educated blacks can get good jobs, often in the public sector, but the less educated are left out in the cold.

Is it just the difference between Chicago and New York? Partly. After all, New York did not have well-paying mass-production industrial sectors—steel and auto, for example. The contrast in wages between International Harvester and Western Electric—major employers that have left the black areas of Chicago Wilson studies—and New York City's garment industry, which typifies manufacturing in New York, makes it clear that losing jobs in the first is a greater blow than losing (or not getting) jobs in the second.

But Waldinger points to another factor that must be taken into account in explaining the evolution of the workless black ghetto. This is the connection between what people expect or hope to earn in jobs and the jobs available. As economists put it, the "reserve wage" of blacks—what they are willing to work for—is higher than the reserve wage of less-educated immigrants: "The immigrants' social origins predisposed them to embrace jobs that native New Yorkers would no longer accept; meager as they appeared to New Yorkers, the paychecks in the city's garment, restaurant, or retail sectors looked good in comparison to the going rate in Santo Domingo, Hong Kong, or Kingston."



Do we yet know, even after Wilson and Waldinger, what has happened to make the black ghetto such a place of despair, at a time when others still find promise in the city—in Chicago as well as in New York? Blacks who have gained advanced education or skills have moved out of the ghetto in large numbers. But many have been left behind, at a time when—owing in part to the passage of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act—relatively low-skilled and poorly educated immigrants have been pouring into the old immigrant cities.

This contrast between the black poor and the new low-skilled immigrants undermines the "mismatch" theory of the condition of inner-city blacks—that the jobs they can fill have left the city and that they are unequipped for the jobs that remain. Uneducated immigrants are even less qualified, one would think, for low-skill jobs that are still a part of the urban economy, yet they get them.

There is a different mismatch, though, that provides a better explanation. This mismatch, which emerged in the late 1960s, before the new immigrant wave grew to its present proportions, was between black expectations regarding what constituted suitable work and suitable wages and what was available. These expectations may well have been fully understandable in the wake of three centuries of slavery and Jim Crow, and at a time when powerful civil rights laws were passed and agencies to enforce them were created. But this past did not change the calculations of employers as they came across applicants who expected more than they could offer and were resentful at what was provided.

These applicants' parents, the migrants from the South, had been prepared to take the poor jobs. In this respect, they were like the earlier uneducated European immigrants, or the lower-skilled immigrants from Asia and Latin America who began arriving in after the 1965 reforms. But their children expected better. Better was not available because of the insufficiencies of their education. Their disappointment and outrage made them poor prospects for the low-level jobs available. So new immigrants got them.

Undoubtedly the legislators who passed, in those same wonderful years of 1964 and 1965, both the civil rights laws and the new immigration law that abolished quotas and racial preferences were fulfilling a great American promise, opening opportunity to all without consideration of race or ethnicity. Ironically, the wider gates to immigration helped undermine the promise of the civil rights law. In the absence of new immigrants, employers might have raised the wages of the jobs they had, and the real wages might then have come closer to matching the "reserve wage" of the children of the black Southern migrants.

This is the second time this scenario has played itself out. Blacks were already on the first rungs of economic advancement when W. E. B. Du Bois studied the Philadelphia Negro in the 1890s, but they were being pushed off those rungs by European immigrants, whom white Americans preferred as employees or providers of services. The story was the same in New York, as Herman D. Bloch showed in his 1969 study of blacks in New York. Combined with the ethnic and racial preferences long rooted in our history, immigration has deeply affected the fate of American blacks. In the past, simple prejudice led employers to prefer white immigrants to native blacks. In today's more tolerant America, employers—black as well as white, as Wilson's research shows—believe they have good reason to be wary of black males from the ghetto, whom they find undependable, irresponsible and angry. And once again, willing immigrants are available.

NATHAN GLAZER

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Latter-day Look

"At a moment when we are all being 'investigated,' or imagining that we shall be, it is vastly disturbing to see indignant images of investigation on the other side of the footlights." So wrote Eric Bentley in 1953, reviewing Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* in TNR. Bentley's widely discussed review then commented on the play's implied parallel between the communist witch-hunt in the early 1950s and the witch-hunt in Salem in 1692.

> [The parallel] is true in that people today are being persecuted on quite chimerical grounds. It is untrue in that communism is not, to put it mildly, merely a chimera.

This criticism is still haunting Miller. In a recent *New Yorker* article about the writing of *The Crucible,* a moving article generally, he refers to this point (without mentioning Bentley) and replies that the existence of witches, in the seventeenth century, "was never questioned by the loftiest minds in Europe and America." But this is no reply: not Bentley nor anyone had questioned that witchcraft was taken seriously in 1692. The real objection was that McCarthyism, as Miller certifies in his article, was what spurred him to write his play and that the analogy with the Salem witch-hunt was specious.

Paradoxically, this 40-year-old argument is all the more interesting today because, at this moment, it is irrelevant. Presented now as a film, **The Crucible** (20th Century Fox) is actually helped by the fact that no topical analogy applies. (Diabolist circles today don't signify politically.) With no need to weather the political-analogy test, freed too of the gratitude of an audience hungry for anti-McCarthyism, the play stands on its own and is better for it.

John Proctor is a farmer in the Massachusetts colony; he and his wife, Elizabeth, have two sons. (Reduced, for some reason, from the three sons in the play.) Some months before the start, Elizabeth had discharged their maid, Abigail Williams, because she thought—justly—that something sexual was brewing between her husband and the maid. Now Abigail, living with her clergyman uncle, dances at night in the woods with other girls her age, 18 or so, more to vent sexual steam than anything else. They are discovered by her uncle, who is enraged.

This turmoil leads to brief hysterical paralysis in two of the girls, and this in turn leads to charges that they have been bewitched. Accusations of witchcraft increase. After a chain of connections, Abigail sees a way, through more accusations of witchcraft, to get rid of Elizabeth so that she can have John. She doesn't see that John, too, will be involved.

A cloudburst of panic breaks over the village. (Abigail's uncle presses witchcraft charges against some men because he wants to acquire their land.) A prominent judge is brought in, and trials are held, all of them recorded. Eventually nineteen people are hanged as witches, including Proctor. He is given a chance to clear himself by signing a confession—to acts he did not commit. He signs; then, like Joan of Arc, he tears up his confession and chooses death. (Abigail had arranged for him to escape with her; he refused, and she fled alone.)

Miller says that he saw his way into the historical material, as a playwright, when he read in the record about a gesture of Abigail's toward John, a gesture revealing tenderness. Thus the play became possible for him when he saw sex as a motivation for Abigail's charges; to which he added land greediness in others. (When Jean-Paul Sartre wrote the first screenplay of *The Crucible* in 1957, called *The Witches of Salem,* he saw the drama baldly as class war.) No one can quarrel with the possible truth of Miller's interpretation, but it's noteworthy that he couldn't envision his play until he saw it in sexual and material terms, which were not at all the supernatural terms in which the colonists and those "loftiest minds" saw it.

Besides these mundane reductions of motive, there are other points to consider. Once the characters are arranged in relation to one another, we simply watch the play unfold predictably. Of course this is also true of great tragedy, but *The Crucible,* as it moves along, seems more the fulfillment of an author's pattern than the grinding of an inexorable fate. And in that pattern there is a gap. Abigail, the Iago of the piece, runs away. Miller merely drops her when he has no further need of her. Not a Shakespearean tactic.

Yet this is the best Miller work that I know. (I haven't seen or read two recent plays.) First, the dialogue. In his modern plays, the dialogue sometimes sounds

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The English Patient. *Wartime Egypt and Italy, several taut love stories. The first half is intelligent, the second is rank romance, but it's all splendidly acted and photographed. (Reviewed 12/9/96)* **Everyone Says I Love You.** *Coming soon. Woody Allen's musical, dexterously deploying 1930s songs in present-day Manhattan, Venice and Paris. Except for Allen himself, exceptionally pleasant. (11/11/96)* **Shine.** *A re-enacted true story. A young Australian pianist is forced into neurosis by a too-loving, too-demanding father. Admirable acting, including a small part by John Gielgud. (11/18/96)* **William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.** *It isn't Shakespeare. It's a translation into 1990s music video, set in South Florida. But the director, Baz Luhrmann, has destructive-constructive imagination. (12/2/96)*—**SK**

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like squeaky shoes, stiff, uncomfortable. His writing seems much more at ease, more easily figurative and less dragooned into poetry, in the formalities of the seventeenth century. (Miller acknowledges the help of a poet friend with the dialogue.) As for the wholeness of the work, there's no point in comparing it with such moribundities as *After the Fall* or *Incident at Vichy* or *The Price* or *Broken Glass*. The two comparable works are *A View from the Bridge* and *Death of a Salesman*. But the former is ultimately a bit of police news decked out with tragic garlands; and the latter does not, as it claims, dramatize the fall of a man, under worldly pressures, into self-delusion. Willy Loman is deluded from the beginning.

The Crucible has sinew. Despite Miller's compression of the metaphysical theme into sweaty contrivings, this is the play of his that comes closest to naked, ancient drama. Forty years after it was written, shorn of contemporary "utility," the play stands a bit taller, especially toward the end (Act Four of the original), where Proctor must make his gaunt choice. (When he rips up his false and cowardly confession, thus choosing the gallows, his wife, weeping, throws herself on him. He looks at the judges and says: "Give them no tear. Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it.")

Miller made his own screen adaptation and, considerably experienced in this work, did it deftly. He has pruned his play for the sake of cinematic movement and expanded it for the same reason. (For instance, to let us see the girls dancing in the woods.) I don't understand why John and Elizabeth have their last private conversation on a beach, with the jailers a hundred yards away, when all they had wanted was to be alone; and I much prefer the way the play ends, with Elizabeth's closing lines after John leaves ("He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him") to the film's finish on the gallows. But Miller has clearly had a fresh look at his work and has restructured it as if he had conceived it for the screen; he hasn't been content to saw up his play and retack it together.

Nicholas Hytner, the director, is less limber here than he was with *The Madness of King George*. Once in a while he indulges in stage "pictures" rather than film flow; and once in a while he misses the center of the action. Early on, when one of the pseudo-paralyzed girls sits up, she is just discernible at the bottom left corner of the screen.

But, miraculously, Hytner has evoked something like a performance from Winona Ryder as Abigail. She doesn't reveal a burning talent, but at least she is here not the star of a college show. Daniel

ON OR ABOUT DECEMBER 1910

Early Bloomsbury and Its Intimate World

PETER STANSKY

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—Regina Marler, SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER & CHRONICLE

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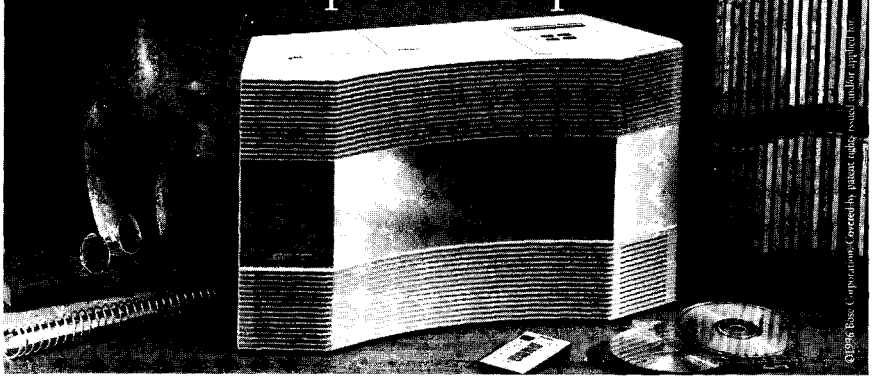

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Day-Lewis, as Proctor, gets better the less he has to be a believable farmer and the more he becomes the protagonist of a moral drama. Joan Allen, who was Mrs. Nixon in *Nixon*, has always been a rather cool actress, so the part fits her. Paul Scofield is the senior judge and speaks his lines adequately. Scofield is of course a highly accomplished actor, but in some roles he does little more than burnish his lines carefully and serve them up on the silver salver of his experience. No bother about creating a man behind the lines. That's what he did as the King of France in Branagh's *Henry V*, and that's what he does here.

Regrets about George Fenton's score. It sounds as if he had been listening to Bernstein's score for *On the Waterfront*. Much heaviness, much tympani. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Paying Tribute to Mediocrity

Oscar Wilde, dismissing Gilbert and Sullivan's delicious satire on him in *Patience*, defined parody as "the tribute mediocrity pays to genius." He obviously hadn't seen **Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!**, a parody playing at a nightspot called The Triad, in which genius pays tribute to mediocrity. Yes, I know that "genius" is probably too elevated a word to describe the informal nature of this sassy revue. But there's certainly enough talent and imagination on display, and enough absurdity in what is being caricatured, to justify a reversal of Wilde's epigram.

Forbidden Broadway's creator, Gerard Alessandrini, has been writing and directing editions of the show since 1982, but the level of his good-natured, laconic indignation has remained constant. And he continues to provide an indispensable vent for those who look with stupefaction on the products that typically achieve success on the Broadway stage, especially its musicals and its musical stars.

Staffed by four young protean performers who do the work of twenty, *Forbidden Broadway* concludes with a flattering tribute to its skewered victim, affirming (in a lyric adapted from *The King and I*) that "Broadway will always be—something wonderful." It is a paradox of parody, and a sign of its parasitical nature, that for all its savagery it cannot survive unless the targets remain standing. But the Broadway savaged in *Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!* is far from wonderful, though it is essential to the equanimity (and employment) of every theater professional to believe "it will always be." It looks rather like some shoulder-shotten swayback warhorse being trotted out for one more campaign before getting consigned to the glue factory.

The evening begins with David Hibbard, impersonating an overly eager-to-please Nathan Lane in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, joined by Christine Pedi playing an overly accessorized Liza Minelli, offering "a travesty tomorrow, a parody tonight." That promise is soon fulfilled by assaults on Hal Prince's politically correct, scenically extravagant *Showboat* (Bryan Batt as a senile Cap'n Andy singing "They call it Slow Boat; they should cut somethin', but don't cut nothin'"); on the ill-fated *Big* ("the musical that looks like a mall"); and on Cameron McIntosh, a British showman who seems to have more interest in selling CDs, mugs and T-shirts ("These are a few of my favorite things") than in producing such shows as *Miss Saigon* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

Alessandrini even dismisses musicals that haven't yet opened—the miscasting of Sarah Jessica Parker in an upcoming edition of *Once Upon a Mattress*—or have not yet been conceived—Bernadette Peters and Mandy Patinkin in an imaginary version of *Kiss Me Kate*. Donna Murphy, equipped with huge lopsided black eyebrows and a mole that's bigger than her chin, takes her lumps for performing Anna in *The King and I* as if she were still playing the depressed Fosca in Sondheim's *Passion*. Patti LuPone, subbing for Zoe Caldwell as the disdainful Maria Callas in *Master Class*, exults in taking swipes at the army of show types who have betrayed her, including Glenn Close (who took over her role in *Sunset Boulevard*), Andrew Lloyd Webber (who fired her from *Sunset Boulevard*), and a conically breasted Madonna (who stole her part in the movie version of *Evita*). Michael Crawford of *Phantom of the Opera*, his hands working frantically around the microphone, is disdained for his fake Alfred Drake vocalizing ("a phony voice is what makes record deals"), while the great loudmouth belter Ethel Merman, scorning the "big black lump" created by hair mikes, gives a lesson on how to sing without amplification.

The cast of *Cats*, the longest-running musical in Broadway history, behaves like the young hopefuls from *A Chorus Line*, the second-longest-running musical in Broadway history ("Meow, I hope I get it"), singing "I really hate this show—but God I need the dough." Savion Glover, played by Bryan Batt in a huge Afro fright wig, stomps the stage to splinters while claiming kinship with Gene Kelly. Ann Reinking, Sally Struthers, Lou Diamond Phillips and other Broadway wannabes are treated as examples of Broadway's current desperation to recruit some stars. But some of the sharpest barbs are reserved for Julie Andrews, uncannily evoked by Donna English with cloying sweetness as she murders the entire Tony Committee for ignoring *Victor/Victoria* ("Just a spoonful of venom makes the industry go down").

The fiercest and most telling parody of the evening, however, is reserved for *Rent* ("It's the season of hype"), which has garnered 525,600 rave reviews and persuaded all of Broadway to think punk. The cast is dying of exhaustion after doing the musical for only six months, and all the actors have lost their voices. The HIV-infected Mimi, who can't breathe inside her blue vinyl pants, experiences an unconvincing recovery from AIDS ("I swear I died—I was going through a tunnel, the Lincoln Tunnel"). "You're supposed to be dead," sings the astonished chorus, "but uh, uh, uh, this ain't *Bohème*." The only theatrical enormity missed by *Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!*—and I imagine it will soon be incorporated into the show—is the recent dismissal of twelve veteran performers recently fired from the cast of *Les Misérables* for the professed purpose of keeping this venerable stale whale "fresh."

When I was a student at the Yale Drama School in 1948, the satiric "takeoffs" devised by the students on the faculty-directed monoliths monopolizing the main stage were about the only things that kept some of us from going mad. I imagine the same is true today of many of the disenfranchised young performers who contemplate a Broadway dominated by long-running Andrew Lloyd Webber hits that all sound the same, tired revivals, new musicals based on old movies, and overhyped commodities like *Rent*.

One of the more poignant conclusions of *Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!* is that the most gifted American actors have abandoned the stage. It was extremely

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encouraging, therefore, to find some of those exiles back, if only for one night, performing at the Helen Hayes Theatre in **Necessary Targets**, a play written and directed by Eve Ensler (author of a piece enticingly titled *The Vagina Monologues*). The occasion was a staged reading held in late October to benefit The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and the Center for Women War Victims, two agencies dedicated to aiding displaced innocents worldwide.

Although *Necessary Targets* will probably be produced later this year by the New York Public Theater (which originally commissioned it), I have my doubts that it will again attract such a remarkable company of actresses or leave such a powerful impact. The play itself is rather like an extended encounter session, involving as it does a trip to Yugoslavia by an American woman psychiatrist and her translator (who is also writing a book on the subject) for the purpose of counselling women victims in Bosnian refugee camps. Although worlds apart when they meet, the two Americans and the Bosnian women eventually manage the inevitable female bonding. The psychiatrist, in particular, loses her professional distance and gains personal empathy, as she learns firsthand of the awful suffering created by men who rape and pillage.

For this one evening, the benefit was able to attract such luminaries as Meryl Streep, Cherry Jones, Anjelica Huston and Lois Smith, among others. They managed to turn what otherwise might have been an inspirational movie of the week into a deeply affecting experience. Cherry Jones, a child of the stage who has never left home, was very telling as a callow writer with careerist ambitions, and all of the others read their parts with power and conviction. But Meryl Streep as the psychiatrist, harrowed by atrocity stories of decapitated husbands and abandoned babies, was the one who raised the level of the evening to true tragedy. Returning to the United States, she discovers she has lost her profession, her country and her purpose in life. The blood that flows through her veins has become one with that of all the suffering women in Bosnia. And "I bleed." The manner in which the actress spoke that line, in a voice rumbling with terror and despair, was so appalling that the hairs stood up on my neck. It was a voice that evoked all the monumental tragic heroines from Hecuba to Mother Courage, and the way Streep visibly affected the audience and the other actresses was not only moving in the extreme but reminded us how much our stage has suffered from the absence of truly great performers. Streep has been absent for fifteen years. But there is consolation in the fact that, given the impact of her playing and the instant appreciation it evoked (compared with the postponed gratifications of, and impersonal audience response to, movie acting), Streep is thinking about returning to the theater she once loved. •

The Posthumous Sublime

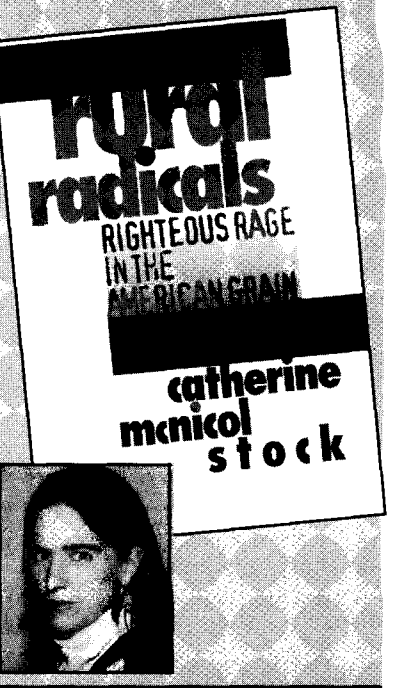
By Cynthia Ozick

The Emigrants
by W. G. Sebald
translated by Michael Hulse

(New Directions, 237 pp., $22.95)

There is almost no clarifying publisher's apparatus surrounding W.G. Sebald's restless, melancholy and (I am almost sorry to say) sublime narrative quartet. One is compelled—ludicrously, clumsily—to settle for that hapless term (what *is* a "narrative quartet"?) because the very identity of this work remains murky. Which parts of it are memoir, which fiction—and ought it to matter? As for external facticity, we learn from the copyright page that the date of the original German publication is 1993, and that the initials W. G. represent Winfried Georg. A meager paragraph supplies a handful of biographical notes: the author was born in Wertach im Allgäu, Germany; he studied German language and literature in Freiburg (where, one recalls, Heidegger's influence as rector of the university, despite his earlier Nazi affiliations, extended well into the 1970s), and later in Francophone Switzerland and in Manchester, England, where he began a career in British university teach-

"A wild ride."*



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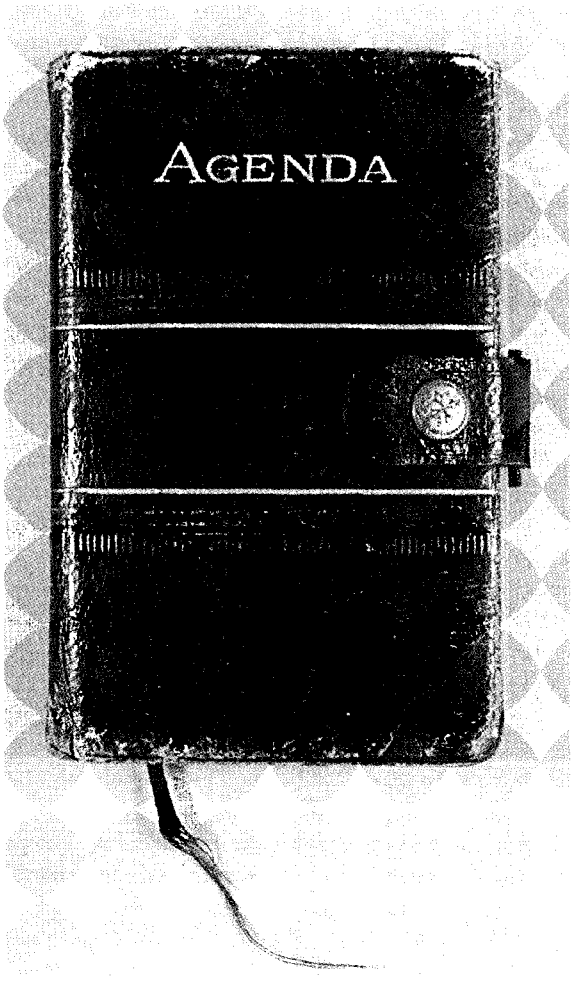
ing. Two dates stand out: Sebald's birth in 1944, an appalling year for all of Europe, and for European Jews a death's-head year; and 1970, when, at the age of 26, Sebald left his native Germany and moved permanently to England.

It cannot be inappropriate to speculate why. One can imagine that in 1966, during the high period of Germany's "economic miracle," when Sebald was (as that meagerly informative paragraph tells us) a very young assistant lecturer at the University of Manchester, he may have encountered a romantic attachment that finally lured him back to Britain; or else he came to the explicit determination, with or without any romantic attachment (yet he may, in fact, have fallen in love with the pathos of soot-blackened Manchester), that he would anyhow avoid the life of a contemporary German. The life of a contemporary German: I observe, though from a non-visitor's distance, and at so great a remove now from those twelve years of intoxicated popular zeal for Nazism, that such a life is somehow still touched with a smudge, or taint, of the old shameful history; and that the smudge, or taint—or call it, rather, the little tic of self-consciousness—is there all the same, whether it is regretted or repudiated, examined or ignored, forgotten or relegated to a principled indifference. Even the youngest Germans traveling abroad, especially in New York, know what it is to be made to face, willy-nilly, a history of national crime, however long receded and repented.

For a German citizen to live with 1944 as a birth date is reminder enough. Mengele stood that year on the ramp at Auschwitz, lifting the omnipotent gloved hand that dissolved Jewish families: mothers, babies and the old to the chimneys, the rest to the slave labor that temporarily forestalled death. Ah, and it is sentences like this last one that present-day Germans, thriving in a democratic Western polity, resent and decry. A German professor of comparative literature accused me not long ago—thanks to a sentence like that—of having a fossilized mind, of being unable to recognize that a nation "develops and moves on." Max Ferber, the painter-protagonist of the final tale in Sebald's quartet, might also earn that professor's fury. "To me, you see," Sebald quotes Ferber, "Germany is a country frozen in the past, destroyed, a curiously extraterritorial place." It is just this extraterritorialism—this ineradicable, inescapable, ever-recurring, hideously retrievable 1944—that Sebald investigates, though veiled and at a slant, in *The Emigrants*. And it was, I suspect, not the democratic Germany of the economic miracle from which Sebald emigrated in 1970; it may have been, after all, the horribly frozen year of his birth that he meant to leave behind.

That he did not relinquish his native language or its literature goes without saying; and we are indebted to Michael Hulse, Sebald's translator (himself a poet), for allowing us to see, through the stained glass of his consummate Englishing, what must surely be the most delicately powerful German prose since Thomas Mann. Or, on second thought, perhaps not Mann really, despite a common attraction to the history-soaked. Mann on occasion can be as heavily ornate as those carved mahogany sideboards and wardrobes—vestiges of proper German domesticity abandoned by the fleeing Jews—which are currently reported to add a certain glamorous middle-'30s tone to today's fashionable Berlin apartments. Sebald is more translucent than Mann. He writes as Turner paints: "To the south, lofty Mount Spathi, two thousand metres high, towered above the plateau, like a mirage beyond the flood of light. The fields of potatoes and vegetables across the broad valley floor, the orchards and clumps of other trees, and the untilled land, were awash with green upon green, studded with the hundreds of white sails of wind pumps." Notably, this is not a landscape viewed by a fresh and naked eye. It is, in fact, a verbal rendering of an old photograph—a slide shown by a projector on a screen.



AMBROS ADELWARTH'S POCKET DIARY, 1913

An obsession with old photographs is what separates Sebald from traces of Mann, from Turner's hallucinatory mists, from the winding reflections of Proust (with whom, in his freely searching musings and paragraphs wheeling cumulatively over pages, Sebald has been rightly compared), and even from the elusively reappearing shade of Nabokov. The four narratives recounted in *The Emigrants* are each accompanied by superannuated poses captured by obsolete cameras; in their fierce time-bound isolations they suggest nothing so much as Diane Arbus. And, wittingly or not, Sebald evokes Henry James as well, partly for his theme of expatriation, and partly on account of the mysterious stillness inherent in photography's icy precision. In the late New York edition of his work, James eschewed illustration, that nineteenth-century standby, and turned instead to the unsentimental fixity of photography's Time and Place, or Place-in-Time. In Sebald's choosing to incorporate so many photos (I count eighty-six in 237 pages of text)—houses, streets, cars, headstones, cobblestones, motionless schoolchildren, mountain crevasses, country roads, posters, roofs, steeples, hotel postcards, bridges, tenements, grand and simple rooms, overgrown gardens—he, like James with his 1909 frontispieces, is acknowledging the uncanny ache that cries out from the silence of solid things. These odd old pictures attach to Sebald's voice like an echo that cannot be heard, no matter how hard one strains; they lie in the crevices of print with a terrible helplessness, deaf-mutes without the capacity to sign.

The heard language of these four stories—memories personal, borrowed, invented—is, as I noted earlier, sublime; and I wish it were not, or, if that is not altogether true, I admit to being disconcerted by a grieving that has been made beautiful. Grief, absence, loss, longing,

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wandering, exile, homesickness: these have been made millennially, sadly beautiful since the *Odyssey*, since the *Aeneid*, since Dante ("You shall come to know how salt is the taste of another's bread"); and, more venerably still, since the Psalmist's song by the waters of Babylon. Nostalgia is itself a lovely and piercing word, and even more so is the German *Heimweh*, "home-ache." It is art's sacred ancient trick to beautify pain, to romanticize the shadows of the irretrievable. "O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again": Thomas Wolfe, too much scorned for boyishness, tolls that bell as mournfully as anyone; but it is an American tolling, not a German one.

Sebald's mourning bell is German, unmistakably German; when it tolls the hour, it is almost always 1944. And if I regret the bittersweet sublime Turner-like wash of Beauty that shimmers over the whole of this volume, it is because sublime grieving is a category of yearning, fit for that which is irretrievable. But 1944 is always, always retrievable. There stands Mengele on the ramp, forever lifting his gloved hand; and there, sent off to the left and the right, are the Jews, going to the left and the right forever. Nor is this any intimation of Keats's urn—there are human ashes in it. The posthumous sublime is discordant; an oxymoron. Adorno told us this long ago: after Auschwitz, no more poetry. We resist such a dictum; the Psalmist by the waters of Babylon resisted it; Paul Celan resisted it; Sebald resists it. It is perhaps natural to resist it.

So, in language sublime, Sebald is haunted by Jewish ghosts—Europe's phantoms: the absent Jews, the deported, the gassed, the suffering, the hidden, the fled. There is a not-to-be-overlooked irony (a fossilized irony, my professor-critic might call it) in Sebald's having been awarded the Berlin Literature Prize—Berlin, the native city of Gershom (né Gerhardt) Scholem, who wrote definitively about the one-sided infatuation of Jews in love with high German culture and with the *Vaterland* itself. The Jewish passion for Germany was never reciprocated—until now. Sebald returns that Jewish attachment, although tragically: he is too late for reciprocity. The Jews for whom he searches are either stricken escapees or smoke. Like all ghosts, they need to be conjured.

Or, if not conjured, then come upon by degrees, gradually, incrementally, in hints and echoes. Sebald allows himself to discover his ghosts almost stealthily, with a dawning notion of who they really are. It is as if he is intruding on them, and so he is cautious, gentle, wavering at the outer margins of the strange places in which he finds them. In "Dr. Henry Selwyn," as the first narrative is called, the young Sebald and his wife drive out into the English countryside to rent a flat in a wing of an overgrown mansion surrounded by a neglected garden and a park of looming trees. The house seems deserted. Tentatively, they venture onto the grounds and stumble unexpectedly on a white-haired, talkative old man who describes himself as "a dweller in the garden, a kind of ornamental hermit." By the time we arrive at the end of this faintly Gothic episode, however, we have learned that Dr. Henry Selwyn was once a *cheder-yingl*, a Jewish schoolchild named Hersch Seweryn in a village near Grodno in Lithuania.

When he was 7 years old his family, including his sisters Gita and Raja, set out for America, like thousands of other impoverished shtetl Jews at the beginning of the century; but "in fact, as we learnt some time later to our dismay (the ship having long since cast off again), we had gone ashore in London." The boy begins his English education in Whitechapel in the Jewish East End and eventually wins a scholarship to Cambridge to study medicine. Then, like a proper member of his adopted milieu, he heads for the Continent for advanced training, where he becomes—again like a proper Englishman—enamored of a

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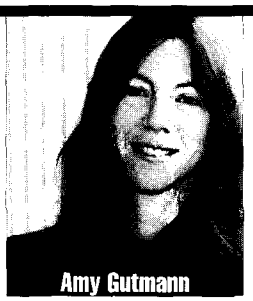
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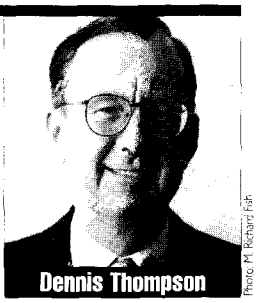
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Swiss Alpine guide named Johannes Naegeli. Naegeli tumbles into a crevasse and is killed; Selwyn returns home to serve in the Great War and in India. Later he marries a Swiss heiress who owns houses in England and lets flats. He has now completed the trajectory from Hersch Seweryn to Dr. Henry Selwyn. But one day, when the word "homesick" flies up out of a melancholy conversation with Sebald, Selwyn tells the story of his childhood as a Jewish immigrant.

The American term is immigrant, not emigrant, and for good reason, America being the famous recipient of newcomers: more come in than ever go out. Our expatriates tend to be artists, often writers: hence that illustrious row of highly polished runaways, James, Eliot, Pound, Wharton, Stein, Hemingway. But an expatriate, a willing (sometimes temporary) seeker, is not yet an emigrant. And an emigrant is not a refugee. A *cheder-yingl* from a shtetl near Grodno in a place and period not kind to Jews is likely to feel himself closer to being a refugee than an emigrant: our familiar steerage image expresses it best. Sebald, of course, knows this and introduces Dr. Selwyn as a type of foreshadowing. Displaced and homesick in old age for the child he once was (or in despair over the man he has become), Dr. Selwyn commits suicide. And on a visit to Switzerland in 1986, Sebald reads in a Lausanne newspaper that Johannes Naegeli's body has been found frozen in a glacier seventy-two years after his fall. "And so they are ever returning to us, the dead," Sebald writes.

But of exactly what is Dr. Selwyn a foreshadowing? Sebald's second narrative, titled "Paul Bereyter," is a portrait of a German primary school teacher, Sebald's own teacher in the '50s, "who spent at least a quarter of all his lessons on teaching us things that were not on the syllabus." Original, inventive, a lover of music, a scorner of catechism and priests, an explorer, a whistler, a walker ("the very image ... of the German *Wandervogel* hiking movement, which must have had a lasting influence on him from his youth"), Paul Bereyter is nevertheless a lonely and increasingly aberrant figure. In the '30s he had come out of a teachers' training college (here a grim photo of the solemn graduates, in their school ties and rather silly caps) and taught school until 1935, when he was dismissed for being a quarter-Jew.

The next year his father, who owned a small department store, died in a mood of anguish over Nazi pogroms in his native Gunzenhausen, where there had been a thriving Jewish population. After the elder Bereyter's death, the business was confiscated; his widow succumbed to depression and a fatal deterioration. Paul's sweetheart, who had journeyed from Vienna to visit him just before he took up his first teaching post, was also lost to him: deported, it was presumed afterward, to Theresienstadt. Stripped of father, mother, inheritance, work and love, Paul fled to tutor in France for a time, but in 1939 drifted back to Germany, where, though only three-quarters Aryan, he was unaccountably conscripted. For six years he served in the motorized artillery all over Nazi-occupied Europe. At the war's end he returned to teach village boys, one of whom was Sebald.

As Sebald slowly elicits his old teacher's footprints from interviews, reconstructed hints and the flickering lantern of his own searching language, Paul Bereyter turns out to be that rare and mysterious figure: an interior refugee (and this despite his part in the German military machine)—or call it, in ominous '30s lingo, an internal emigrant. After giving up teaching—the boys he had once felt affection for he now began to see as "contemptible and repulsive creatures"—he both lived in and departed from German society, inevitably drawn back to it, and just as inevitably repelled.

All his adult life, Sebald discovers, Paul Bereyter had been interested in railways. (The text is now interrupted by what appears to be Paul's own sketch of the local *Bahnhof*, or station, with the inscription "*So ist es seit dem 4.10.1949*," "This is how it has looked since April 10, 1949.") On the blackboard he draws "stations, tracks, goods depots, and signal boxes" for the boys to reproduce in their notebooks. He keeps a model train set on a card table in his flat. He obsesses about timetables. Later, though his eyesight is troubled by cataracts, he reads demonically—almost exclusively the works of suicides, among them Benjamin, Klaus Mann, Koestler, Zweig, Tucholsky. He copies out, in shorthand, hundreds of their pages. And finally, on a mild winter afternoon, he puts on a windbreaker that he has not worn since his early teaching days forty years before, and goes out to stretch himself across the train tracks, awaiting his own (as it were) deportation. Years after this event, looking through Paul's photo album with its record of childhood and family life, Sebald again reflects: "it truly seemed to me, and still does, as if the dead were coming back"—but now he adds, "or as if we were on the point of joining them."

Two tales, two suicides. Yet suicide is hardly the most desolating loss in Sebald's broader scheme of losses. And since he comes at things slant, his next and longest account, the history of his aunts and uncles and their emigration to the United States in the 1920s—a period of extreme unemployment in Germany—is at first something of a conundrum. Where, one muses, are those glimmers of the Jewish ghosts of Germany, or any inkling of entanglement with Jews at all? And why, among these steadily rising German-American burghers, should there be? Aunt Fini and Aunt Lina and Uncle Kasimir, Aunt Theres and Cousin Flossie, "who later became a secretary in Tucson, Arizona, and learnt to belly dance when she was in her fifties": these are garden-variety acculturating American immigrants; we know them; we know the smells of their kitchens; they are our neighbors. (They were certainly mine in my North Bronx childhood.) The geography is familiar—a photo of a family dinner in a recognizable Bronx apartment (sconces on the wall, steam-heat radiators); then the upwardly mobile move to Mamaroneck, in Westchester; then the retirement community in New Jersey. To get to Fini and

Encampment

The dog bays. That tarp the sky is, with its local moon,
I've traversed, a sentimental watch,
pretending to commune,

because there's nothing else to do with the dark,
but walk it, neighbor myself.
The dog has reasons of its own to live.

The arcade on the pier's shut down again
the way it is for children with something they desire,
a small furred thing, a plastic amulet

denied them. I tell myself everything gives itself away,
and clangors down the chute.
Who am I to stipulate?

My hand cups the spout, its hinged flap.
The carnival in me starts up.
A toy rattles in its sphere.

In the crease of my palm
a minute barque
breaks on the horizon.

SANDRA STONE

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Kasimir, drive south from Newark on the Jersey Turnpike and head for Lakehurst and the Garden State Parkway. In search of Uncle Adelwarth in his last years: Route 17, Monticello, Hurleyville, Oswego, Ithaca. There are no ghosts in these parts. It is, all of it, plain-hearted America.

But turn the page: here are the ghosts. A photo of Uncle Kasimir as a young man, soon after his apprenticeship as a tinsmith. It is 1928, and only once in that terrible year, Kasimir recounts, did he get work, "when they were putting a new copper roof on the synagogue in Augsburg." In the photo Kasimir and six other metal workers are sitting at the top of the curve of a great dome. Behind them, crowning the dome, are three large sculptures of the six-pointed Star of David. "The Jews of Augsburg," explains Kasimir, "had donated the old copper roof for the war effort during the First World War, and it wasn't till '28 that they had the money they needed for a new roof." Sebald offers no comment concerning the fate of those patriotic Jews and their synagogue a decade on, in 1938, in the fiery hours of the Nazis' so-called Kristallnacht. But Kasimir and the half-dozen tinsmiths perched against a cluster of Jewish stars leave a silent mark in Sebald's prose: what once was is no more.

After the roofing job in Augsburg, Kasimir followed Fini and Theres to New York. They had been preceded by their legendary Uncle Ambros Adelwarth, who was already established as a major domo on the Long Island estate of the Solomon family, where he was in particular charge of Cosmo Solomon, the son and heir. Adelwarth helped place Fini as a governess with the Seligmanns in Port Washington, and Theres as a lady's maid to a Mrs. Wallerstein, whose husband was from Ulm in Germany. Kasimir, meanwhile, was renting a room on the Lower East Side from a Mrs. Litwak, who made paper flowers and sewed for a living. In the autumn, succahs sprouted on all the fire escapes. At first Kasimir was employed by the Seckler & Margarethen Soda and Seltzers Works; Seckler was a German Jew from Brünn, who recommended Kasimir as a metal worker for the new yeshiva on Amsterdam Avenue. "The very next day," says Kasimir, "I was up on the top of the tower, just as I had been on the Augsburg Synagogue, only much higher."

So the immigrants, German and Jewish, mingle in America much as Germans and Jews once mingled in Germany, in lives at least superficially entwined. (One difference being that after the first immigrant generation the German-Americans would not be likely to continue as tinsmiths, just as Mrs. Litwak's progeny would hardly expect to take in sewing. The greater likelihood is that a Litwak daughter is belly dancing beside Flossie in Tucson.) And if Sebald means for us to feel through its American parallel how this ordinariness, this matter-of-factness, of German-Jewish coexistence was brutally ruptured in Germany, then he has succeeded in calling up his most fearful phantoms.

Yet his narrative continues as impregnable here as polished copper, evading conclusions of any kind. Even the remarkably stoic tale of Ambros Adelwarth, born in 1896, is left to speak for itself—Adelwarth, who, traveling as valet and protector and probably lover of mad young Cosmo Solomon, dutifully frequented the polo grounds of Saratoga Springs and Palm Beach, and the casinos of Monte Carlo and Deauville, and saw Paris and Venice and Constantinople and the deserts on the way to Jerusalem. Growing steadily madder, Cosmo tried to hang himself and at last succumbed to catatonic dementia. Uncle Adelwarth was obliged to commit him to a sanitorium in Ithaca, New York, where Cosmo died—the same sanitorium to which Adelwarth, with all the discipline of a lifetime, and in a strange act of replication, later delivered himself to paralysis and death.

The yeshiva on Amsterdam Avenue, the Solomons, Seligmanns, Wallersteins, Mrs. Litwak and the succahs on the Lower East Side: this is how Sebald chooses to shape the story of the emigration to America of his Catholic German relations. It is as if the fervor of Uncle Adelwarth's faithful attachment to Cosmo Solomon were somehow a repudiation of Gershom Scholem's thesis of unrequited Jewish devotion; as if Sebald were casting a posthumous spell to undo that thesis.

And now on to Max Ferber, Sebald's final guide to the deeps. Ferber was a painter whom Sebald got to know—"befriended" is too implicated a term for that early stage—when the 22-year-old Sebald came to study and teach in Manchester, an industrially ailing city studded with mainly defunct chimneys, the erstwhile black fumes of which still coated every civic brick. That was in 1966; my own first glimpse of Manchester was nine years before, and I marveled then that an entire metropolis should be so amazingly, universally charred, as if brushed by a passing conflagration. (Later Sebald will tell us that in its bustling heyday Lodz, in Poland—the site of the Lodz Ghetto, a notorious Nazi vestibule for deporta-

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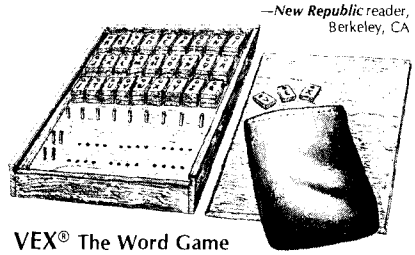

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tion—was dubbed the Polish Manchester, at a time when Manchester, too, was booming and both cities had flourishing Jewish populations.) At 18, Ferber arrived in Manchester to study art and thereafter rarely left.

It was the thousands of Manchester smokestacks, he confided to the newcomer Sebald, that prompted his belief that "I had found my destiny." "I am here," he said, "to serve under the chimney." In those early days Ferber's studio, as Sebald describes it, resembled an ash pit: "when I watched Ferber working on one of his portrait studies over a number of weeks, I often thought that his prime concern was to increase the dust ... that process of drawing and shading [with charcoal sticks] on the thick, leathery paper, as well as the concomitant business of constantly erasing what he had drawn with a woollen rag already heavy with charcoal, really amounted to nothing but a steady production of dust."

And in 1990, when Sebald urgently undertook to search out the life of the refugee Max Ferber and the history of his lost German Jewish family, he seemed to be duplicating Ferber's own pattern of reluctant consummation, overlaid with haltings, dissatisfactions, fears and erasures: "not infrequently I unraveled what I had done, continuously tormented by scruples that were taking tighter hold and steadily paralysing me. These scruples concerned not only the subject of my narrative, which I felt I could not do justice to, no matter what approach I tried, but also the entire questionable business of writing. I had covered hundreds of pages.... By far the greater part had been crossed out, discarded, or obliterated by additions. Even what I ultimately salvaged as a 'final' version seemed to me a thing of shreds and patches, utterly botched."

All this falls out, one imagines, because Sebald is now openly permitting himself to "become" Max Ferber; or, to put it less emblematically, because in these concluding pages he begins to move, still sidling, still hesitating, from the oblique to the head-on; from intimation to declaration. Here, terminally—at the last stop, so to speak—is a full and direct narrative of Jewish exile and destruction, neither hinted at through an account of a loosely parallel flight from Lithuania a generation before, nor obscured by a quarter-Jew who served in Hitler's army, nor hidden under the copper roof of a German synagogue, nor palely limned in Uncle Adelwarth's journey to Jerusalem with a Jewish companion.

Coming on Max Ferber again after a separation of twenty years, Sebald is no longer that uncomprehending nervous junior scholar fresh from a postwar German education: he is middle-aged, an eminent professor in a British university, the author of two novels. And Ferber, nearing 70, is now a celebrated British painter whose work is exhibited at the Tate. The reunion bears unanticipated fruit: Ferber surrenders to Sebald a cache of letters containing what is, in effect, a record of his mother's life, written when the 15-year-old Max had already been sent to safety in England. Ferber's father, an art dealer, and his mother, decorated for tending the German wounded in the First World War, remained trapped in Germany, unable to obtain the visas that would assure their escape. In 1941 they were deported from Munich to Riga in Lithuania, where they were murdered. "The fact is," Ferber now tells Sebald, "that tragedy in my youth struck such deep roots within me that it later shot up again, put forth evil flowers, and spread the poisonous canopy over me which has kept me so much in the shade and dark." Thus the latter-day explication of "I am here to serve under the chimney," uttered decades after the young Sebald loitered, watchful and bewildered, in the exiled painter's ash-heaped studio.

The memoir itself is all liveliness and light. Sebald recreates it lyrically, meticulously—from, as we say, the inside out. It begins with Luisa and Leo Lanzberg, a little brother and sister in the village of Steinach, near Bad Kissingen, where Jews have lived since the 1600s. ("It almost goes without saying," Sebald interpolates—it is a new note for him—"that there are no Jews in Steinach now, and that those who live there have difficulty remembering those who were once their neighbors and whose homes and property they appropriated, if indeed they remember them at all.") Friday nights in Steinach juxtapose the silver Sabbath candelabrum with the beloved poems of Heine. The day nursery, presided over by nuns, excuses the Jewish children from morning prayers. On Sabbath afternoons in summer, before the men return to the synagogue, there is lemonade and challah with corned beef. Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur; then the succah hung with apples and pears and chains of rose hips. In winter the Jewish school celebrates both Hanukkah and the Reich. Before Passover "the bustle is dreadful." Father prospers, and the family moves to the middle-class world of Kissingen. (A photo shows the new house: a mansion with two medieval spires. Nevertheless several rooms are rented out.)

And so on and so on: the blessing of the ordinary. Luisa grows into a young woman with suitors; her Gentile fiancé dies suddenly, of a stroke; a matchmaker finds her a Jewish husband, Max's father. "In the summer of 1921," Ferber's mother writes, "soon after our marriage, we went to the Allgäu ... where the scattered villages were so peaceful it was as if nothing evil had ever happened anywhere on earth." Sebald, we know, was born in one of those villages.

In 1991, fifty years after the memoirist was deported to Riga, Sebald visits Steinach and Kissingen. In the old Jewish cemetery in Kissingen, "a wilderness of graves, neglected for years, crumbling and gradually sinking into the ground amidst tall grass and wild flowers under the shade of trees, which trembled in the slight movement of the air," he stands before the gravestones and reads the names of the pre-Hitler dead, Auerbach, Grunwald, Leuthold, Seeligmann, Goldstaub, Baumblatt, Blumenthal, and thinks how "perhaps there was nothing the Germans begrudged the Jews so much as their beautiful names, so intimately bound up with the country they lived in and with its language." He finds a more recent marker: a relative of Max Ferber's who, in expectation of the outcome, took her own life. (The third suicide in Sebald's quartet.) And then he flees: "I felt increasingly that the mental impoverishment and lack of memory that marked the Germans, and the efficiency with which they had cleaned everything up, were beginning to affect my head and my nerves." A sign on the cemetery gates warns that vandals will be prosecuted.

The Emigrants (an ironically misleading title) ends with a mental flash of the Lodz Ghetto: the German occupiers feasting, the cowed Jewish slave laborers, children among them, toiling for their masters. In the conqueror's lens Sebald sees three young Jewish women at a loom and recalls "the daughters of night, with spindle, scissors and thread." Here, it strikes me, is the only false image in this ruthlessly moving and profoundly honest work dedicated to the recapture of phantoms. In the time of the German night, it was not the Jews who stood in for the relentless Fates, they who rule over life and death. And no one understands this, from the German side, more mournfully, more painfully, than the author of these sad and subterranean re-creations.

CYNTHIA OZICK's new novel, *The Puttermesser Papers*, will be published by Knopf in the spring.

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Call It Sleep

BY JAMES WOOD

Drown
by Junot Díaz

(Riverhead Books, 208 pp., $21.95)

Junot Díaz's short stories—quick, skinned, craftily alive—are as representative of the 1990s as long poems were representative of the 1790s. Cool and grimy, they tell us about contemporary urban America, reflecting, like puddles, whatever is tramping the sidewalk. But Díaz's book also tells us much about contemporary literature, acting like a glass hull through which one can see the narrow currents of American writing today.

Junot Díaz was born in the Dominican Republic in 1969 and came as a child to live in the United States. He is a graduate of Rutgers and of the writing program at Cornell. This is his first book. He writes about growing up in the Dominican Republic, but more often about adult deprivation and boredom in New Jersey—drug-dealing, drug-taking, theft, family avoidance, the gruel of unnourishing jobs. Every story but one in *Drown* is a first-person narration. This preference may be Díaz's way of honoring the raw biases of the immigrant observer; but it also reflects a contemporary suspicion, institutionalized in writing programs, of the third-person as too godly. Old-fashioned third-person narration is sent from an official ghost, like a bill. First-person narration is a letter from a real being.

Díaz uses this letter-like communication with real skill. His narrators speak a non-literary vernacular, compounded of African American slang, loosened Spanish and standard American short story-telling (that is to say, storytelling that is still dieting on the honest reductions of Raymond Carver). "Earlier today me and Cut drove down to South River and bought some more smoke" is how "Aurora" begins. It continues:

> The regular Friday pickup, enough to last us the rest of the month. The Peruvian dude who hooks us up gave us a sampler of his superweed (Jewel luv it, he said) and on the way home, past the Hydrox factory, we could have sworn we smelled cookies baking right in the back seat. Cut was smelling chocolate chip but I was smoothed out on those rocky coconut ones we used to get at school.
>
> Holy shit, Cut said. I'm drooling all over myself.
>
> I looked over at him but the black stubble on his chin and neck was dry. This shit is potent, I said.

When this language is working, it truthfully matches the brittle exhaustions of its world, something terminal yet unfinished. Díaz's sentences are so spare that his stories seem not to accumulate but to shed sentences. A tentative poetry is sometimes visible in this New Jersey landscape. One of his narrators sees the artificially ripe color of the neon sky at dusk: "We watch the cars and above us the sky has gone the color of pumpkins." Or this: "The heat in the apartment was like something heavy that had come inside to die."

But this flash of metaphor is like the silken inner lining of a coat which we glimpse only occasionally; in general, a hard fabric is turned outwards, as protection for bleakness and misery. A young boy in "Fiesta," about to go to a family reunion, laments: "I'd never once been out with my family when it hadn't turned to shit." In "Aurora," a New Jersey drug-dealer tells us about his girlfriend, just released from prison, and logs the month through brand-names: "She came home in September and by then we had the Pathfinder in the parking lot and a new Zenith in the living room." The couple is always fighting. The story's narrator wonders who starts what: "She once tried to jam a pen in my thigh, but that was the night I punched her chest black-and-blue so I don't think it counts."

Though Díaz has been acclaimed for the mongrel brilliance of his language, its Hispanic residue is actually slender. His young, knowing characters are much more likely to tread American than dance Spanish: "Being around Papi all her life had turned her into a major-league wuss." Díaz seems representative of his time in the relative lack of curiosity that he brings to the immigrant's task of verbal negotiation and bargaining. His characters are more like impoverished tourists than zealous inhabitants: they make do, either in Spanish or in a minimal and busted English.

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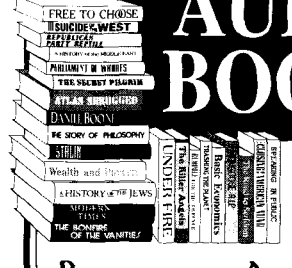

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The traditional project of immigrant literature, that of breaking the old verbal vessels, has gone partly because the verbal vessel is not intact enough to be broken. [The verbal vessel is already in pieces.] Díaz paddles in remnants, abandoning something that he does not possess anyway. This represents a legitimate aim on Díaz's part, which is to give body to his characters' lack of curiosity. But it also represents Díaz's own lack of curiosity, which is in turn the larger failure of the literary age.

The difference between the 1990s and the first decades of the century—both periods of mobility, for populations and for languages—is also the difference between modernism and a conservative literary fin-de-siècle, and it may be seen by comparing passages from Henry Roth's novel of Jewish-American immigrant life, *Call It Sleep*, which appeared in 1934, and Díaz's story "Edison, New Jersey." Roth was born in Galicia, in 1906. A year later his parents brought him to New York. His novel, one of the greatest of this century, is an autobiographical account of a young boy's swarming encounters with his new world.

Roth provides an introduction, in which we see a boat arriving in Manhattan. It is 1907; the boat is filled with "natives from almost every land in the world, the jowled close-cropped Teuton, the full-bearded Russian, the scraggly-whiskered Jew. . . ." The boat rounds the Statue of Liberty, and this provides Roth with the symbolic opening to his novel of immigrant wonder. David Schearl, the young hero, gazes with his mother in awe at this difficult novelty. The vision is ominous, but wondrous: "And before them, rising on her high pedestal from the scaling swarmy brilliance of sunlit water to the west, Liberty . . . to those on board who gazed, her features were charred with shadow, her depths exhausted, her masses ironed to one single plane. . . . The child and his mother stared again at the massive figure in wonder."

Compare this with a luminously unyielding scene in Díaz's story "Edison, New Jersey." A young man from the Dominican Republic, who works in New Jersey delivering pool tables, has met an unhappy woman, also from the Dominican Republic. She works as a maid and asks the man to take her away from her employment, and back to New York. They drive into Manhattan over the George Washington Bridge.

> Is this the best way? she asks. The bridge doesn't seem to impress her.
>
> It's the shortest way.

A moment later:

> I want to ask her if she loves her boss, but I ask instead. How do you like the States?
>
> She swings her head across at the billboards. I'm not surprised by any of it, she says.

So the gap is between David's "wonder" in Roth's novel and this woman's "not surprised by any of it," between the boat's theatrical arc round Liberty and a disgruntled "Is this the best way?" Díaz sees this, and evokes it. But immigrants' diminished hopes, along with the familiar Americanization of the world in the course of the century, do not by themselves explain this lack of surprise. For this is also a reluctance to be surprised. And this reluctance is a literary change, of which Díaz is not the descriptive commander but perhaps an ambiguous product. It is a change in what we expect of literature's capacities, from Roth's mobile, bursting plenum—stuffed, gourd-like, with tactilities—to Díaz's cool abandonments, his shavings. In this, as in everything else, Díaz's stories are typical, and soak up the temper of their times.

"Immigrant literature" has always been a somewhat useless category. For immigration tends merely to accentuate already existing literary impulses, as mixing drinks makes us drunker. Immigration acts like literature. It shocks cognition, stimulates seeing and hearing, excites the writer's sensitivity to language, to novelty. In a moment of transparent self-signaling on Henry Roth's part, David's mother exclaims to her son: "Aren't you just a pair of eyes and ears!"

As indeed Roth is. His novel greedily sees and hears all the gross abrasions of life in the Lower East Side. Of course, the immigrant writer brings new concerns and anxieties to the literature, new subject matter. Roth brings the excited interest of the immigrant writer in language and, in particular, in the anxiety of verbal imposture. David gets lost and is unable to make sense to passers-by, because he mangles Bardhee Street into "Boddeh Stritt," which helpful adults assume to be a version of Potter Street. At last an Irish policeman decodes David's mutilation. "'Bardhee Street!' The helmeted one barked good-naturedly. 'Be'gob, he'll be havin' me talk like a Jew. Sure!' "

This anxious interest in language is one of the subjects of immigrant literature of this century. The Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, a Jew born in Warsaw and brought up in St. Petersburg, studied philology at university; in *The Noise of Time* he writes of how he constructed a language as a child out of his mother's literary Russian and his father's "languagelessness." Recent books by American immigrants or by first-generation Americans dwell on the limits of the world as dictated by the limits of language. Sandra Cisneros, in *The House on Mango Street* (1984), has a lovely vignette: "My father says when he came to this country he ate hamandeggs for three months. Breakfast, lunch and dinner. Hamandeggs. That was the only word he knew. He doesn't eat hamandeggs anymore." *Native Speaker* (1995), by the talented Korean-American writer Chang-rae Lee, takes imposture and the search for a natural language as its theme. For Lee, the immigrant will always carry the ampoule of ethnicity with him, and a native language is not only verbal, but the entire semiosis of assimilation—even how one walks: "Kwang himself exhibited a different grace: he didn't sport the brief choppy step of our number, but seemed instead to stride in luxurious borrowed lengths." Kwang walks like an American, and simultaneously fails to walk like an American.

Díaz plays interesting variations on this theme. Most of his characters are a little too cool to share the careful noticings and strivings of Lee's Asian American world. They are attentive enough to language and its resonances, but in a bored, fatigued way. They are semiotically hardened; signifiers bounce off them. Díaz's delivery man, in "Edison, New Jersey," reflects cynically on the name Pruitt, one of his drop-offs. "Pruitt. Most of our customers have names like this, court case names: Wooley, Maynard, Gass, Binder, but the people from my town, our names, you see on convicts or coupled together on boxing cards." It is not a question of imposture, of "borrowed lengths;" your name is pinned to you like a convict's badge. That's the end of it.

Díaz's characters are not in the business of explaining or justifying. His stories skillfully catch them in their own glue of confusion, unable or unwilling to change anything. His title-story enacts this unwillingness at the level of meaning. It hinges on the undisclosed meaning of the word "*pato*." The narrator tells us of a friend: "He's a pato now but two years ago we were friends and he would walk into the apartment without knocking. . . ." This is how the story begins. It turns the non-Spanish speaker, who will not know what "pato" means (it means homosexual), into a kind of immigrant, dependent on the Baedeker of the story for help. And, indeed, the story becomes the explanation of why the two are no longer friends, and how homosexuality has come between them.

Díaz throws many Spanish words at us—*chinga, jarones, jaivas, flaca, guapo,*

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tetas, vaina—but these are simply dropped into the fat of the sentence to be cooked a little. They are supposed to remain fairly raw. Most of the stories make a point of not attempting to translate them for us: "Yeah, he said, and when I get home, I'm going to go crazy—chinga all my girls and then chinga everyone else's." "She was no longer the same flaca who had arrived three years before." Despite Díaz's skill with non-literary vernacular, his language often fails to challenge, for his Spanish words either use their context to become explicable (and thus act as if they were obscure English words), or remain inexplicable, mysteriously but rather effetely perfuming the sentence.

Díaz would perhaps like to bring an exilic pathos to his language. He prefaces his book with a poem by Gustavo Pérez Firmat:

> My subject:
> how to explain to you that I
> don't belong to English
> though I belong nowhere else.

This somewhat ennobles his prose. Díaz belongs quite comfortably in English. In fact, his language is remarkably unmarked by Spanishness. He shows little interest in doing something new with the language. His diction is an American vernacular: it is like a man with his head down, walking fast through the streets. At times, it is perfectly metaled. And at times, it degenerates into easy slang: "He and Miguel gave each other the sort of handshakes that would have turned my fingers into Wonder bread."

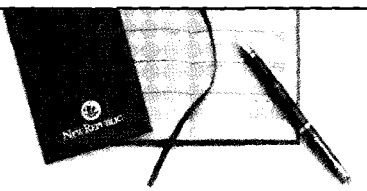
In this respect, too, his stories are like their contemporaries. For it is striking that, despite the interest in language as a subject, very little of the enormous explosion of immigrant literature in the last decade—Asian American literature, Latino or Chicano literature, Cuban-American literature—has been concerned with constructing a new literary language. This hardest of endeavors, to be original, is barely a concern of these writers at the level of style. It is as if all the effort of literary originality has been used up in the struggle to hurry a new world and a new subject matter into being; as if style were just shoe polish, which might prettify but which will not materially aid this windblown passage. Most of the fiction by recent immigrants to America, or by first-generation Americans, is written in a conventional literary language; most of it is uninterested in its own stylistic procedures and impostures.

But this should not surprise. For what is characteristic of older immigrant literature, with all its fierce verbal effort, is that it coincided with modernism. It was modernism. Modernism was a literature of exile and immigration. Writers came to new places and listened hard to native speech (like T.S. Eliot) or took their language with them like an inner land and migrated anew into it, thereby rendering what was foreign around them relatively unimportant (like Joyce). *The Waste Land* is a kind of immigrant novel-in-verse; there is a letter, written from London in 1914, in which the newly arrived Eliot reports on London's aural novelties: "The noise hereabouts is like hell turned upside down." He overhears shouted Cockney non-sequiturs: "What's to prevent him putting arsenic in our food?" Eight years later, this would become the pub-talk of *The Waste Land*: "You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique"—Eliot inventing, in one line, Harold Pinter's entire oeuvre.

Henry Roth's book is full of Polish-English rhythms, Yiddish-English rhythms, the slide of Irish speech, and Roth labors phonetically to reproduce accent on the page, which is something very few of our recent immigrant or first-generation writers do: "Mine fodder woiks inna joolery shop. In Brooklyn. Didja ever live in Brooklyn?" For this reason, Roth's novel has much more in common with Stephen Crane's *Maggie of the Streets*, with Joyce, with Bellow, than it does with that robustly vulgar work of immigrant Jewish life, Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917). And the contemporary immigrant writer most alive to his own language, and to the comedy of imposture—I mean Salman Rushdie—is a comic modernist whose favorite writers are Joyce and Bellow.

Díaz seems shrunken alongside these older writers. Compared with them he seems to have been the victim of sensory deprivation. He has some interest in how people look, but he has little interest in how they speak. It is this that marks him off from earlier immigrant writers. His characters talk in stringy glazed abruptnesses, part Carver and part film-script. Characters speak to each other, but with little reciprocity. In dialogue, two people will sound as if they are not with each other, but alone and talking on the phone to someone absent:

> I'm Dominican, I say.
> You don't look it.
> I get a glass of water. We're both staring out at the muddy lawn.
> She says, I didn't answer the door because I wanted to piss him off.
> Piss who off?
> I want to get out of here, she says.
> Out of here?
> I'll pay you for a ride.
> I don't think so, I say.
> Aren't you from Nueva York?
> No.



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Díaz deserves credit for the transparency with which he renders these non-encounters. But eventually this comes to seem like an anorexia of sensibility on the writer's part, rather than a faithful integrity to character. Certainly, Díaz's characters seem real. But one becomes restive with them. They are de-seeded, without the pith of affect. They are people without any obvious inner life. They neither communicate with each other nor with themselves; so they are not motive-bearing agents, and our interest in them is limited. Although they have pasts, they are stunned and menaced by the present. They do not appear to want to confess their pasts; they narrate their stories to the reader as if we were oppressing them, and as if their inner lives were criminal and cordoned. They barely ever see moments of tenderness, or apertures of change. Díaz cannot, apparently, watch his characters change or grow. Instead, he photographs their stasis, emblematizing that stasis in a small vignette or scene: a small boy and his brother torment a deformed child; a small boy sits at a family party, agonizing over his knowledge that his father is having an affair; a young man hangs out on the streets, dealing drugs and telling us about his violent relationship with his girlfriend, who is in prison; two men travel around New Jersey, delivering pool tables.

The chief danger for this kind of writing is that, being about blankness and stasis, it becomes itself blank and static, like someone holding onto frozen metal and finding it has stuck to the skin. This blankness sometimes registers itself at the level of diction, as repetition and crudity. Thus the story "Aurora" over-uses the word "ass" and compounds made from "ass." We have "her sharp-ass nails," "my smooth-ass line," "she's pumping her hips into him and he's got his hairy-ass hands in her hair," "his big head looks ridiculous on his skinny-ass neck," and "it was a cold-ass stare," all in a very short story. At such moments, Díaz seems the victim of his chosen literary world.

These stories do so much so well, and are so warily delicate, that it is only when one has finished *Drown* that one realizes, with a shock, that an entire world has moved by with not one moment of grand pathos, no moment of exultation, no aesthetic or visionary aeration, no metaphysical reckoning, no stylistic lavishness or verbal plenty, no moment of moral expansion. Everything is so stripped down and hidden that the stories begin to be about their absences. They are like Tantalus's torture, forever hiding their quenchabilities from us. The language is canny and taut, but it dares just enough and not too much. This is an immigrant literature not too anguished about its immigration. It negotiates not between languages, but between vocabularies ("She was no longer the same flaca who had arrived here three years before"). The syntactic rhythms are ruly.

The contemporary idea of the short story, as processed by writing programs, is that it must present itself as a victim of its own confusion, as a bewilderment, a fragment. This is what Díaz does. His stories are quick savage swipes of the cloth across reality. Yet this swipe is not allowed to clear any vision; it merely adds another layer to reality's dirtiness. Here we have the contemporary literary ideal: peeled, direct, hard, expert, acute and a little bit foreign. Whose motto might be: Do not give anything away. Meaning: control your information and your language (technically); but also, do not concede anything (metaphysically). The concession of beauty is not possible; only the hard bargain of minimality. These are sad stories, in what they acutely portray and in what they acutely represent. •

Rendering Unto Caesar

By G. W. Bowersock

A History of Rome under the Emperors by Theodor Mommsen translated by Clare Krojzl

(Routledge, 642 pp., $45)

In 1902 the Nobel Foundation awarded its prize in literature to the German historian Theodor Mommsen for a history of the Roman republic written half a century before. After an absurd choice the previous year for the first Nobel Prize for Literature ever given, the committee appeared to have opted for someone safe. By the time of the award Mommsen was internationally famous. He was nearing the end of a brilliant career as both professor and politician. But his *History* was the work of a younger and very different person.

It was a product of the late 1840s, when its author, a young liberal activist, participated in revolutionary gatherings at Leipzig and lost his post at the university. As he continued his work on his history, the political struggles in Germany inevitably shaped his vision of republican Rome. What Mommsen saw in Rome was the creation of a unified nation out of disparate but related elements, and that was exactly what he wanted to see in Germany. His history, written in dramatic and irresistible prose—it deserved its Nobel Prize in Literature—is the most impassioned of all modern narratives of classical antiquity. It remained popular in Germany throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly for its apotheosis of Julius Caesar as the man who reluctantly but decisively used force against his own country.

Mommsen's account of the Roman republic completely displaced the earlier and more nuanced view of Barthold Georg Niebuhr, and his admiration for Caesar went on to find echoes in many German writers until after the Second World War. The contemporary character of the *History* when it appeared remained no less contemporary in the twentieth century. No historical work has ever exemplified better what the Germans call *Vergegenwärtigung*, the representation of the past in terms of the present. Mommsen's *History* speaks of Junkers, capitalists, generals, classes and political parties. From the clarion call of his opening pages, Mommsen lets the reader know what to expect:

> It is the history of Italy that is to be told here, not the history of the city of Rome. If from a purely constitutional perspective it was the municipality of Rome that achieved domination first over Italy and then over the world, in a higher historical sense this position is utterly indefensible and what we are accustomed to designate the subjugation of Italy by the Romans appears much more as the unification into a single state of the whole race of Italic peoples, of whom the Romans are certainly the strongest but nonetheless only a branch.

And it is hardly surprising to find, when we reach Mommsen's assessment of Caesar in his third volume, a dithyrambic laudation that went straight to the heart of most Germans:

> The new monarch of Rome, the first ruler over the entire territory of Graeco-Roman civilization, Gaius Julius Caesar, was in his

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fifty-sixth year when the battle at Thapsus, the last link in a long chain of significant victories, left him to decide the future of the world. The capacity of few men has been so tested as was that of this unique creative genius.... From his youth Caesar was a statesman in the deepest sense of the word, and his aim was the highest that is granted to men to achieve: the political, military, spiritual, and moral rebirth of his own deeply depressed nation and of the even more depressed sister nation of the Hellenes. The hard school of thirty years of experience altered his opinions about the means by which to reach this goal.... The soldier in him played a thoroughly subordinate role, and it is one of his most fundamental qualities, distinguishing him from Alexander, Hannibal and Napoleon, that it was not the officer in him but the demagogue that impelled him to political action.

Mommsen's erudition never obscured his rhetoric. We are left to wonder who decides what might be "the higher historical sense" or "the deepest sense" of the word "statesman." Throughout the *History*, Mommsen's hopes for the German nation and his interpretation of the construction of the Roman state were conditioned by Germany's traumatic experience of Napoleon. His lyrical assessment of Caesar resonated ominously for 100 years, until it was seriously challenged by Hermann Strasburger in 1953 and, more recently, by Christian Habicht. Strasburger argued that the testimony from Caesar's own contemporaries proved Mommsen's assessment untenable, while Habicht rehabilitated Cicero as a politician and challenged the caricature that Mommsen had created of his Caesar.

When the Nobel Committee made its award in 1902, in short, they were honoring a work that still had contemporary relevance. It would be hard to make a similar claim for Sully Prudhomme and Bjørnstjerne Martinus Bjørnson, the laureates of 1901 and 1903. While these two poets have sunk long since into the obscurity of doctoral dissertations, Mommsen remains even now a commanding figure. But his reputation stands today more on his achievements as a scholar than as a politician or literary artist. After the youthful *History*, he devoted himself tirelessly to the exposition of Roman law in massive works on the constitutional and penal systems. He organized and promoted several huge projects, including one to publish all known ancient Latin inscriptions and another to assemble all known historical texts on the early Germans. Meanwhile, ever productive, he fathered sixteen children.

But Mommsen never continued his *History* into the Roman Empire, though he repeatedly professed an intention to do so. His survey of the Roman provinces appeared as Volume Five in the series in which Volumes One to Three comprised the history of the Republic. The fifth volume, coming two decades after the third, was received respectfully, but it never won the audience of the first three. It was the missing Volume Four that was to contain the story of imperial Rome. Over the latter years of the nineteenth-century rumors circulated from time to time that the master was on his way to completing the missing volume. The Nobel Committee may even have thought it could push the old professor along.

Yet Mommsen himself had given signs of reluctance. In 1882 he wrote with unpersuasive modesty that he was trying to determine if he could still write something that people would want to read, but he realized that he no longer could: "I now know, alas, how little I know, and the divine arrogance has deserted me." Mommsen made the same point in the preface to a reprint of an Italian translation of his *History* when he wrote, with an arrogance that was anything but divine, "I no longer have, as I did when I was young, the courage to make mistakes."

Youthful audacity was not the only thing that Mommsen lacked for writing about the empire, and he knew it. He told Nicholas Murray Butler in Berlin that he had never been able to ascertain what had brought about the collapse of the Roman Empire, and he told another American visitor that the necessary sources were simply not available: "What authorities are there beyond the Court tittle-tattle?" This, from a scholar who knew more inscriptions than anyone else alive. Mommsen had no interest in religion. He viewed the imperial period as a desert, as a time of stagnation and decay. And beyond all these reasons for procrastination lay Mommsen's fear of competing with Gibbon. In the volume on the provinces he had called for a narrative of the reign of Diocletian "with a precise understanding of detail but written with the great spirit and wider sense of vision of Gibbon." On occasion he invoked Gibbon explicitly as the reason for not continuing his own *History*.

Despite frequent and often sycophantic pleas to Mommsen to bestow his Roman Empire upon an impatient world, some observers felt that the great man would do better to leave the subject alone. In 1884 Wilhelm Dilthey, writing to his friend and correspondent Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, revealed himself among the most percipient. He had heard that Mommsen was at work on his imperial history. "But," observed Dilthey, "he is tired and covered with dust

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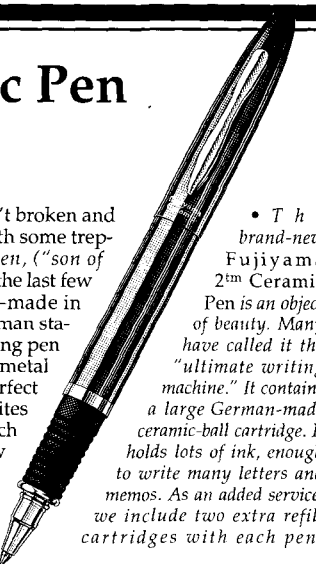

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from walking along the highways of philology, epigraphy, and party politics. And it is unthinkable that anyone could write about the age of emergent Christianity without any feeling for religion, or indeed without some spiritual yearning for the invisible kingdom. I do not consider him capable of writing about even the early history of the Germanic peoples." Presumably Dilthey thought Mommsen incapable of saying anything significant about all the texts that he was collecting for the grandly named *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. And Yorck responded a few months later in equally strong language. He labeled Mommsen "an impossible historian" who might shift a date or turn up a fact or two but was incapable of sound judgment because he lacked integrity.

The immense fame of Mommsen has naturally eclipsed opinions like these, but it is good to be reminded of them when we confront the new materials that Barbara and Alexander Demandt have recently made public, and which have now been translated into English. They are nothing less than complete notes from Mommsen's lectures on the Roman Empire in 1882-83 and 1886. Alexander Demandt discovered them in a bookshop in Nuremberg in 1980. The notebooks were lovingly prepared by the son and the grandson of Wilhelm Hensel, a Prussian court painter best known for drawings of his eminent contemporaries. The artist had married the sister of the composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and their son Sebastian wrote a history of the Mendelssohn family. Sebastian and his son Paul were admiring auditors of Mommsen's lectures. Their copious notes give every indication of being an accurate representation of what the professor said.

These are not the first notes from Mommsen's lectures on the empire to have surfaced since his death. Two different sets had been made available to his son-in-law, the great scholar of Greek literature, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, in 1918 and 1928. On both occasions Wilamowitz advised against publishing the material. Any publication would have been "embarrassing" and at odds with familial obligations. He clearly saw that the lectures would damage Mommsen's reputation. Now the Hensel notebooks amply confirm Wilamowitz's assessment, as does a brief fragment preserved in the Berlin Academy with part of Mommsen's own draft for his volume on empire.

The Mommsenian history that has been given to the world is unbelievably bad. It is of no use whatever for comprehending the Roman Empire. It is even more opinionated than the history that had made the young historian's reputation, but it lacks any kind of insight or depth. Its interest lies principally in exposing the weak flank of a great man. The Roman Empire had always been a foreign country for Mommsen, as his reference to "the long status quo of the imperial age" in Volume One makes perfectly plain. In Mommsen's defense it ought to be said that by refusing to produce the missing volume of his *History* he probably was signaling his own awareness of his inadequate understanding of imperial history. Unfortunately this did not inhibit him from lecturing on the subject, and his admirers have unwittingly made it possible to examine what both he and his son-in-law wisely kept out of sight.

The Berlin Academy fragment, with Mommsen's own words, is distressingly consistent with the notes taken by the Hensels. A censorious tone and ubiquitous gloom characterize virtually everything written in the fragment on imperial Rome. According to Mommsen, from the very beginning of the empire "the attempt to advance civilization was abandoned, and it stagnated on the level it had attained at the onset of the era." As time went by, "military rule lapsed into despotism, and the world indeed became a vale of tears (*Jammertal*), a swift escape from which was an enviable lot, and where all that mattered was to escape into a dream-world until the moment of true salvation."

The Hensel notes deliver more of the same nonsense and at great length. "After Augustus," we are told, "utter tedium reigned. Later no one was interested in literature." So much for Seneca, Petronius, Juvenal, Tacitus, Martial. As for Augustus's own contemporaries, Mommsen had no better opinion. He thought that Virgil's notorious wish to burn the *Aeneid* was entirely justified, and he judged Horace's *Odes* inferior to his *Satires*. Unless the scribe was nodding, Mommsen appears to have believed that Ovid's lost *Medea* was an ode rather than a tragedy, and the poet's surviving works he considered nothing more than pedestrian versification "on anything and everything ... without the slightest poetic content."

If Mommsen had been concerned that he no longer possessed the courage to make mistakes in print, he certainly felt fortified to do so in his lectures. The errors recorded by the Hensels would make a good undergraduate blush. In discussing the Jews, Mommsen coolly declares that "ancient Judaism was unfamiliar with the notion of a Messiah, because it had no need of one." He is no more accurate when he comes to the Christians at the Council of Nicaea, where he thinks that the Arians were in the majority. Mommsen's assessments of the emperors could, on a charitable view, represent an attempt to imitate Gibbonian irony, but the result is invariably absurd. Neither Robert Graves nor Mommsen himself on another day would have agreed that Claudius "is the easiest of all Roman rulers to ridicule: it is hardly even possible to deal with him seriously." Several historians less talented than Mommsen have dealt with Claudius very seriously and successfully.

Towards Jacob Burckhardt, Mommsen displays the hostility with which he and his son-in-law pursued that historian to their last days. Burckhardt had written the most original and perceptive assessment of Constantine since Gibbon. But when Mommsen took up the subject, he first denigrated the ancient writer Lactantius for being unable to see what was going on and then remarked dryly, "However, Burckhardt was even less able to see it." Later he disparaged Constantine's achievement as "not a great work of statesmanship," and the emperor himself he found not to be "the genius that Burckhardt would like to make him."

This sort of personal attack before an unsuspecting student audience was only a part of a pattern of behavior that led to the ostracism of several major scholars of antiquity during Mommsen's lifetime. Mommsen had power and he liked to use it. The aging liberal had become an ardent monarchist, who valued and practiced autocracy in support of what he believed to be right. He deeply mistrusted hereditary succession, but he had always preferred Caesar to Cicero. In the 1880s he could assert with confidence that Julius Caesar had "a democratic mission," even though it is inconceivable that Caesar would have restored the republic that he seized by force.

Mommsen's liberalism, as it developed, would look distinctly odd in the modern political spectrum, but his commitment to participation in public affairs was unmistakable. Balanced against his long service as Permanent Secretary of the Berlin Academy of Sciences (from 1873 to 1895) is his membership in the Prussian parliament for six years in the 1870s and in the Reichstag for three years in the 1880s. He remained alert to the dangers posed by powerful leaders less liberal than himself, and he was taken to court for labeling Bismarck's economic policy a sham (*die Politik des Schwindels*). The lectures that the Hensels heard were delivered in this turbulent period, and they may indirectly reflect Mommsen's views on the German state.

Certainly his doctrine of a unified gov

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ernment reinforced by a single language emerges clearly from his treatment of the Romanization of the Mediterranean world. "Language," Mommsen declared, "is a crucial vehicle for national integration: the spread of Latin signifies Romanization." In these lines it is easy to read "German" for Latin and "Germanization" for "Romanization." Mommsen had been born in Schleswig in 1817 and knew all too well the politics of language in Schleswig-Holstein, where Danish had been made a compulsory school subject in the year of his birth. In an introduction to this English edition of the Hensel notes, Thomas Weidemann sees a direct reference here to the assimilation of Poles. But Mommsen's view of the matter is, as he was quick to recognize, complicated by the role of Hellenism in the Roman world, and he felt obliged to assert that "we have to deny the equal status of Hellenism in the Roman Empire." The success of Byzantium compelled Mommsen to modify his strange opinion with an even stranger one: "Hellenism had to perish in order to survive forever." This is sham history and unappealing liberalism, but it has to be seen in its context.

Mommsen's belief in a unified state also underlies his assessment of Marcus Aurelius, whom Mommsen judged a failure owing to what he calls "the detrimental consequence of the Marcomannic Wars." These struggles that Marcus led on the Danubian frontier irrevocably and ruinously altered, in Mommsen's view, the nature of recruitment into the Roman army. Although he gave these wars too much prominence in the transformation of the military, what he detected is undoubtedly there, namely "the barbarization and provincialization of Roman troops." For many historians, the secret of Rome's success was precisely the incorporation of outsiders and provincials into the structure of government (not merely the army). But for Mommsen, the Wilhelmine liberal, this policy of inclusion was a disaster.

What really engaged Mommsen was constitutional history and, to a lesser degree, fiscal history. His only profound thoughts on the empire were devoted to his area, but his overarching view of a "dyarchy," extrapolated from his work on the struggles of the late Republic, introduced a fundamental flaw in his reflections. His utter failure to understand the social, cultural and religious life of the Mediterranean world made him, as he probably realized, incapable of matching Gibbon's performance. His blindness to such central aspects of imperial history also meant that he could not see the construction of the powerful weapon that would ultimately bring down his constitutionally based interpretation of empire.

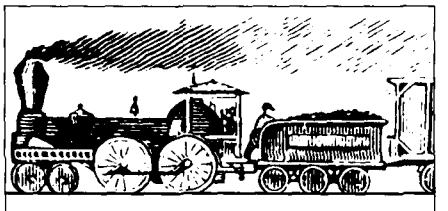
The preparation of the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*, a systematic register of all known persons of any consequence in the Roman Empire, was launched at the initiative of Hermann Dessau, a scholar who knew from his work on Latin inscriptions the potential importance of their evidence for people and careers in the writing of social history. Mommsen viewed Dessau's work with skepticism, though he did recognize in him another master of epigraphy. The new research in prosopography formed the basis for many important articles in the standard classical encyclopedia (Pauly-Wissowa), and it inspired a new generation of German historians in the generation after Mommsen's death in 1903. Historians such as Friedrich Münzer, Matthias Gelzer and Arthur Stein, all heirs of Dessau, provided the direct inspiration for Ronald Syme, whose magisterial study, *The Roman Revolution*, detonated in 1939 a charge of dynamite beneath the great Mommsenian edifice. The smoldering remains were not immediately obvious amid the palpable destruction of the Second World War, but after 1945 rebuilding Mommsen's Rome was impossible.

The way into the Roman Empire that Mommsen had never found was at last opened up by Syme. Linking his work with Gibbon's and concentrating on people, personalities and power, Syme revealed a teeming and complex world. His exceptional sympathy with literature made a striking contrast with Mommsen's obtuseness. With the social and the cultural dimensions of the empire finally defined, the religious history of the age could begin to take shape as well. Syme himself had little taste for religion apart from its political role, but the generation that succeeded him, including several of his own pupils, was easily able to adapt the methods that he had espoused for the evocation of a spiritual world in which unseen figures became no less influential than those that populated the *Prosopographia Imperii Romani*.

Of course Mommsen's tremendous achievements remain, above all the corpus of Latin inscriptions, the monumenta of texts on Germany, the meticulous analyses of Roman constitutional and penal law. But Dilthey and Yorck were right. The mature Mommsen was no longer a historian. He labored on his learned projects in the shadow of an increasingly militarist German state. He delivered his lectures on the Roman Empire in that same shadow, and they command attention today largely for the alarming symptoms of weakness, pessimism and outright incomprehension that they imply for late nineteenth-century Germany.

Finally we must ask why the Hensels (like, presumably, many of Mommsen's other students) admired these lectures so much and undertook to preserve, as far as possible, the master's every opinion. Sebastian Hensel's letters to Mommsen suggest little more than uncritical awe of a great man. But there may have been another reason for this enthusiasm for Mommsen. An unsubtle picture of stagnation, incompetence and tedium in the Roman Empire may have provided some comfort to the cultivated milieu of the Mendelssohns that had generally felt closer to the Greeks. The family had befriended many of the great Hellenists of the age, including August Boeckh, Karl Otfried Müller and Johann Gustav Droysen. Felix Mendelssohn, whose fascinating correspondence with Droysen survives, had even written incidental music for two of Sophocles's tragedies, (*Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus*). And such tastes were hardly unusual, as E.M. Butler demonstrated forty years ago in her study of what she called the tyranny of Greece over Germany in the nineteenth century. The celebrity of Theodor Mommsen was something of an anomaly in his own time.

G.W. Bowersock is a member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.



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NEW YORK DIARIST

Carry a tune

WALKING THROUGH THE UNION Square Farmer's Market, hunting for cider and acorn squash amid the canopies under the trees, I came across a half-circle of children, 5, 6 and 7 years old, gathered around a man who looked like he'd stepped out of an antiquated comic book. The kids were laughing and dancing to music the man was playing, music that sounded nothing like anything on the radio or on any Billboard list today—music that you never hear beyond a ten-foot radius of a carousel. The man looked absurd; he wore a beret, a striped sailor's shirt, a red mustache and a knotted bandanna. He could not have appeared more stereotypically French had he been waving a baguette and shouting "*Vive la France*!" He stood before a varnished wooden music box that looked (and was) 100 years old. His music box was called a Barbary organ, and he worked it by turning a crank on one side with his right hand, while feeding punched sheets of cardboard through a slot in the left side at the other. He accompanied the tinny sounds himself, his tenor voice bobbling lightheartedly along. The joy of the children at the music was startling to me because it was so unhidden, so uncontrolled. They could not stop bouncing, reacting to it.

HAVING LIVED IN NEW YORK FOR almost a decade, I have forgotten about children a little. I remember being in the subway not long ago and seeing a pretty woman, who, though only about 4'8", was perfectly proportioned. I was thinking, what a shame—that woman would have had an easy life if she had been normal-sized—until she stood up and took her mother's hand, and I realized she was not a dwarf, she was a child. Children can become alien in New York, as can childlike frankness about music; knowing what you like to listen to, rather than what you're supposed to like to listen to.

THE NAME OF THE MUSICIAN IN Union Square was Jean-Marie, and he had inherited the Barbary organ from his grandfather, who had played it in the '20s in the streets of Paris, along with another silver-throated down-and-outer named Edith Piaf—or so Jean-Marie swore. Jean-Marie played the same airy, singsong, melodic tunes his grandfather and Piaf had played: "Faithful," "The Sea," "I Regret Nothing," "Life Through Rose-Colored Glasses," "It's So Good," "There's Joy." In the '20s, buskers like Jean-Marie's grandfather performed romantic and sentimental songs for coins to feed the gas jet to heat their cold-water flats, coins to buy a little bread, some wine and sausage. The upbeat titles of the songs disguised an era of postwar vice, hunger and want that extended through all the social classes. These days, many people would consider the conditions the writers of those songs lived in to be squalid, unhealthy, down-at-heel, limited and depressing. Current bands, like Hole, Nine Inch Nails, Garbage, whatever, would undoubtedly have written a different set of anthems if they'd been around in Paris in the '20s, anthems that would have painted the realities of the era in the kind of unforgiving light that a car mirror sheds on a woman's face. But if they had, the children wouldn't have been dancing on this bright, cold day in the park, to these unexpected songs that had nothing to do with being cool; and were only written with the embarrassingly unironic aim of making catchy tunes to illustrate a time, or a person, that someone wanted to remember, not to forget.

I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FIND Jean-Marie since that day I ran into him at Union Square, but I have a tape with a photo of him, to prove that he exists. Every now and then, another street musician turns up who knocks the wind out of me. A noble, well-dressed man standing under a catwalk sings "Old Man River" in full voice, two Chinese men in the Times Square subway station play hauntingly sharp, unruined old songs from some epic of desertion, a woman sings Celtic ballads that make the tears rise. The best singers draw a reverential crowd, similar to the children who gathered around Jean-Marie, but the grown-ups don't go so far as to dance along. Some throw in dollar bills, and some even buy a tape, or miss a train or two while they listen on. But most spend their big money in the modern way, in the popular, loud clubs where music is spectacle not melody, where the songs are as affecting as a Jenny Holzer tickertape line. The music is strictly binary: (1) self-pity (2) rage.

THERE ARE A FEW GROUPS THAT I like, and I trail them around the city worshipfully. But I'm not going to kid myself and pretend that the rest of the nation is as ready to swoon as I am at Julian Fleisher's Rather Big Band, Yuri Naumov's insane Russian blues, the Five Floor Monica a capella group, Vox Bop. But, still, part of me hopes for a sea change that will bring a 1997 resurrection of the Ink Spots' "Someone's Rockin' My Dreamboat," Bing Crosby's "It's Been a Long, Long Time," ("Kiss me once, and kiss me twice, and kiss me once again...") and what's-her-name's "I Don't Want to Walk Without You." I pine for the day when the Comedian Harmonists, an a capella Jewish and German group from the '30s, a group I first heard about in a pelting rain on a hillside during a string quartet in Dresden, will play every hour on MTV; when someone who doesn't have braids and a beard can sing songs about love and hold his head up in polite company. Why is it that the only time you hear a song with a recognizable melody, it's Christmas, it's Woolworth's and you're sick of it? Just because a song, or a singer, or even a kind of song, has been forgotten doesn't mean it should have been

I HAPPEN TO BE REASONABLY SURE that at least one New Yorker feels pretty much the same way I do about music which reassures me. His movies may strike other people as primarily about words, or neuroses. They're "text driven," you would say, in the publishing lingo that grays this town. To me though, his movies are also musical, each one an arcane connoisseur's list of songs that should never have gone off the radio, off the jukebox. One of his movies (by all means correct me if I'm wrong I'm not about to re-watch all twenty of them) has a personal favorite of mine Cole Porter's "I Happen to Like New York," with the words every New Yorker who stays here for any length of time hopefully agrees with:

I like the city air, / I like to drink of it, / the more I know New York the more I think of it, / I like the sight and the sound and even the stink of it, / I happen to like New York.

This year, Woody Allen has gone so far as to make a new movie, *Everyone Says I Love You*, which is an undisguisedly song-driven ode to romance and the city. Clearly, he's on the offensive. If Oasis and the Smashing Pumpkins can revive the Beatles, if Hootie and the Blowfish can bring back the Commodores, and even the metal groups Kiss and Extreme were good for one ballad each, surely Woody can bring back the love song?

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